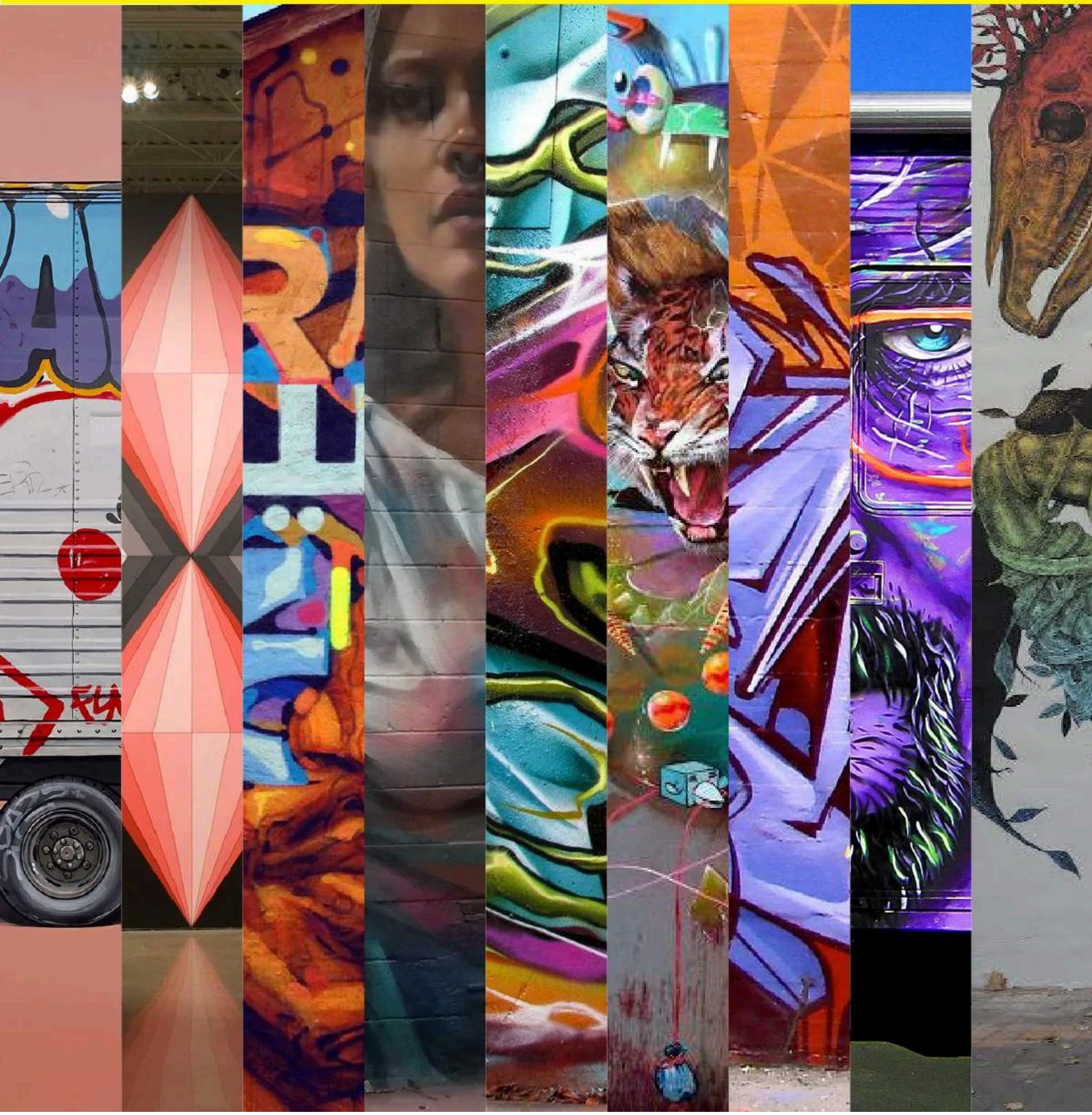
ARTS X CULTURE

ISSUE #15

BIZARRE BEYOND BELIEF MAGAZINE

KEVIN CYR - DALEK - SAM RODRIGUEZ - JARUS - BONZAI - NOSEGO - EWOK - MADSTEEZ - ALEXIS DIAZ



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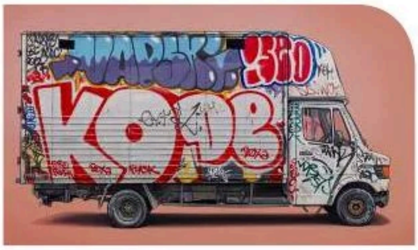

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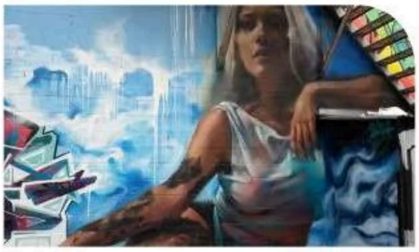

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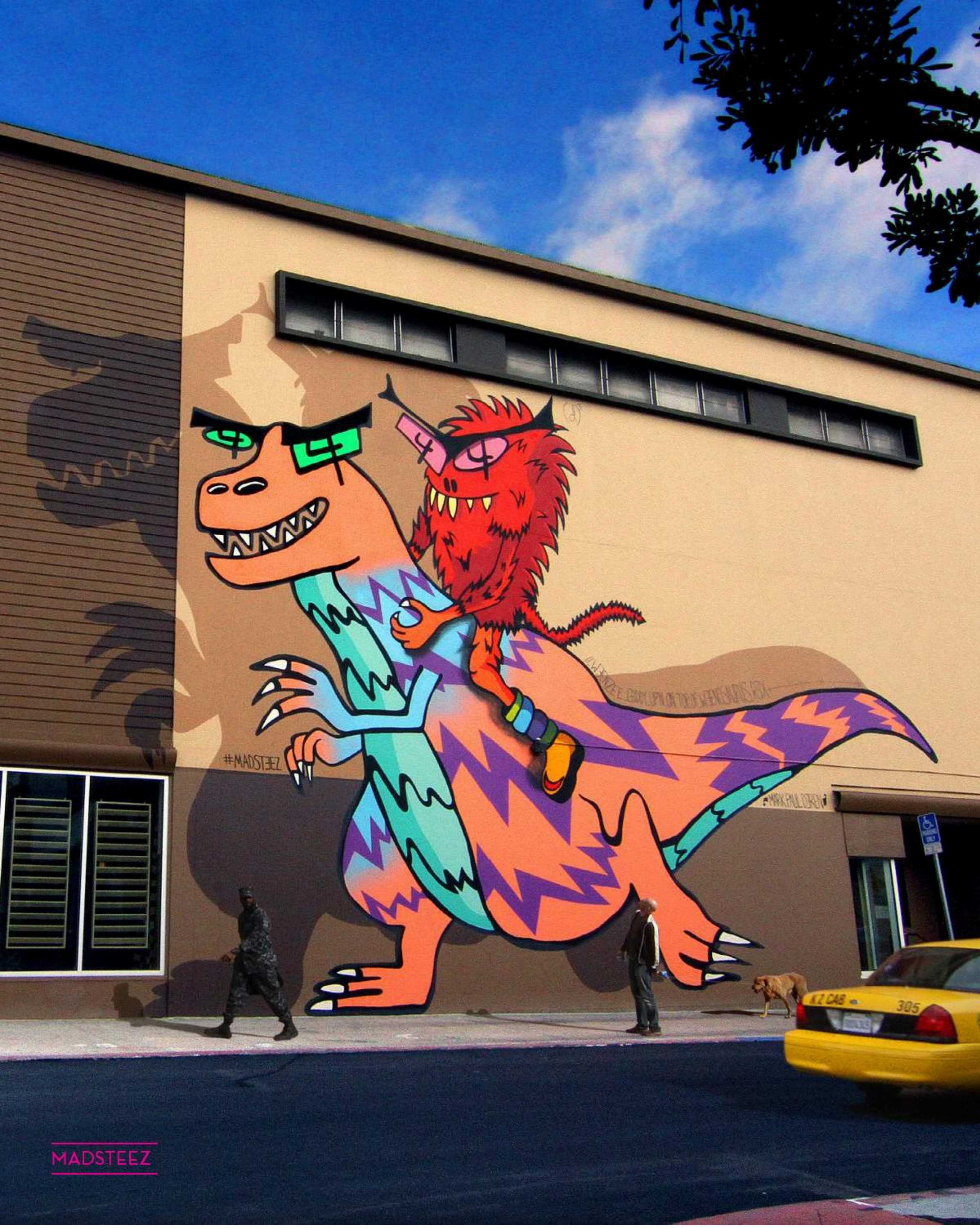
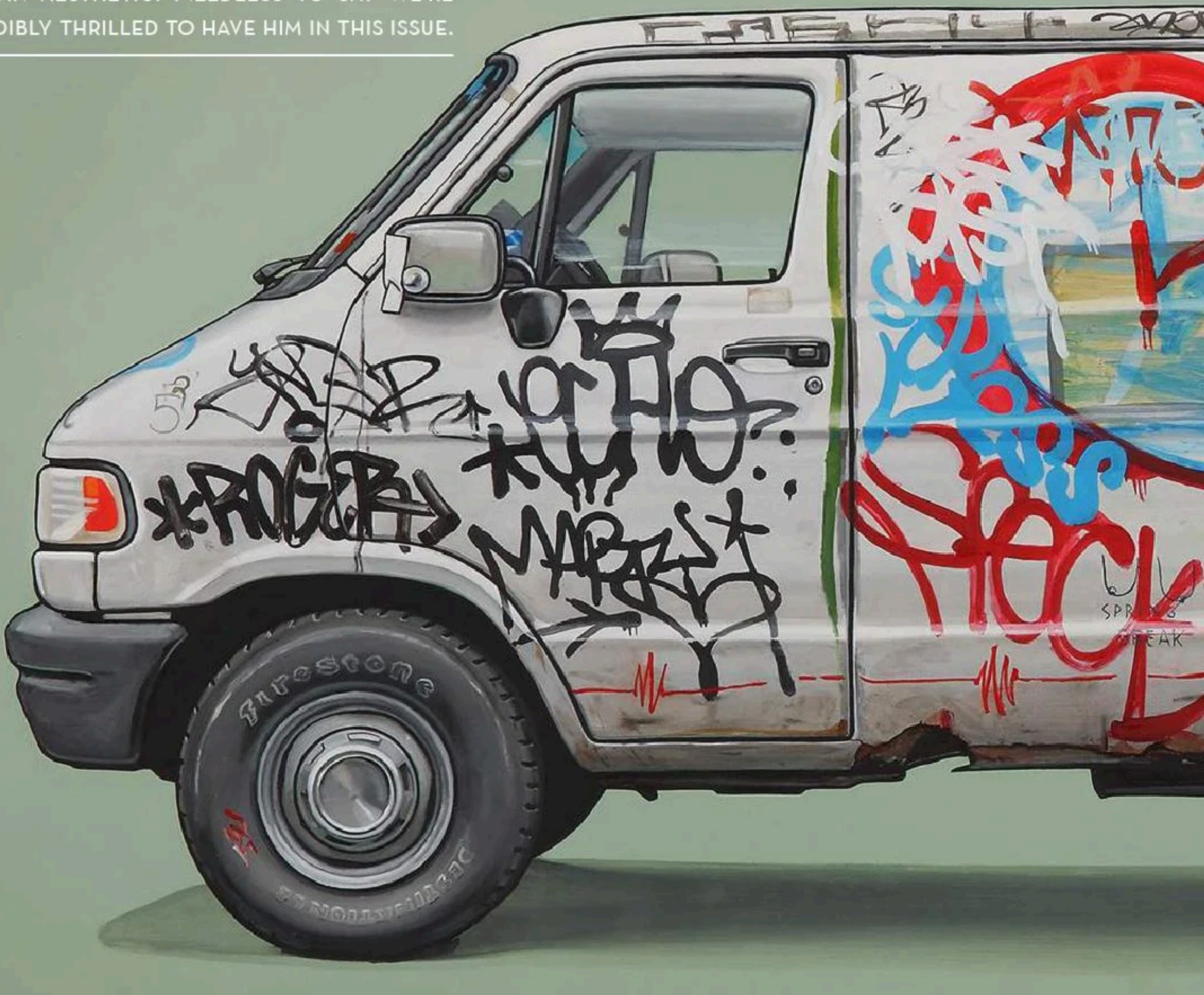
Dedicated to the brilliant, beautiful and bizarre. Whimsical tales, visuals & various odds and ends about obscure and misunderstood sub-cultures.


#MADSTEEZ
MARK PAUL DEREN

MADSTEEZ

KEVIN CYR

A Canadian born & American raised talent, Kevin Cyr has been a long favourite of us here. With a keen eye for detail and impressive painting techniques his paintings are a brilliant mix of traditional rendering & urban aesthetic. Needless to say we're incredibly thrilled to have him in this issue.



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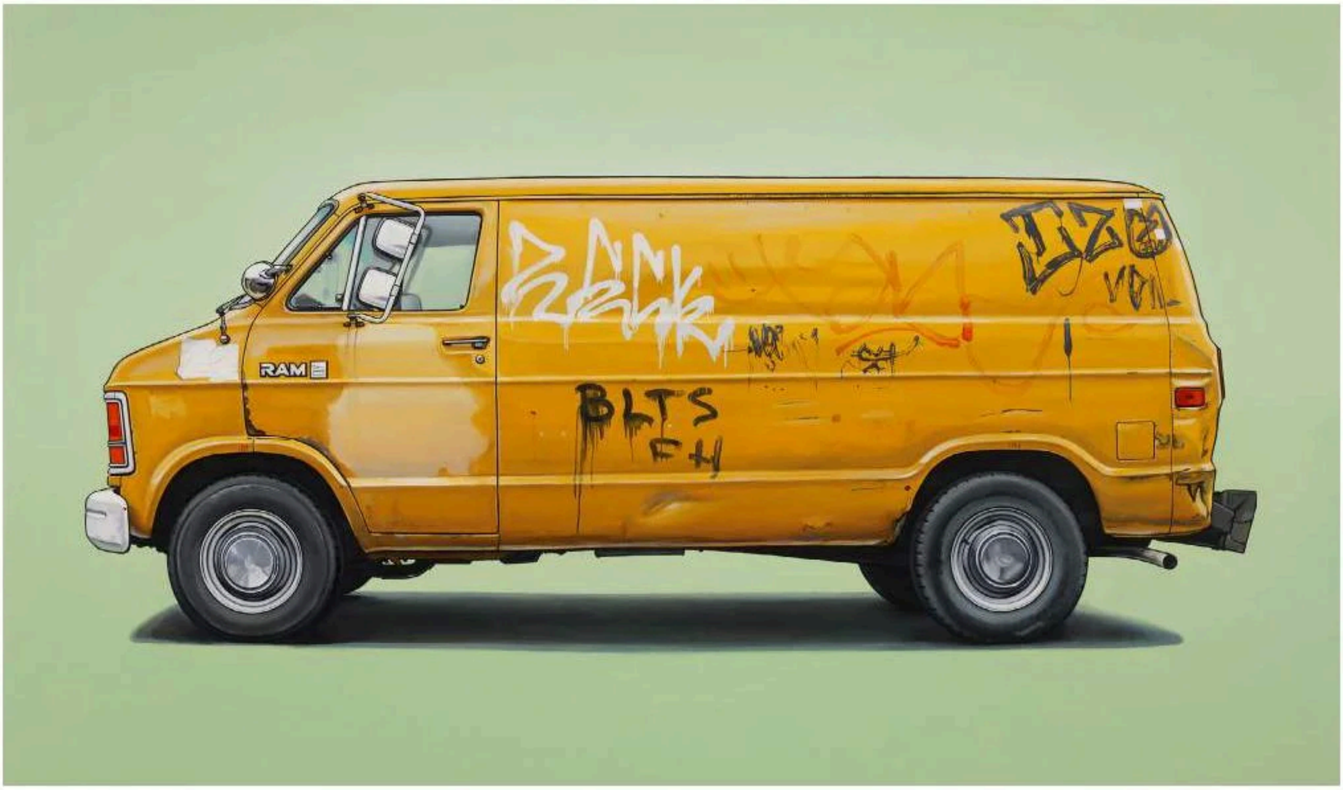


Bizarre Beyond Belief: As an artist born in Canada but raised in the United States, do you feel any connection to Canadian culture or has that been lost over the years?

Kevin Cyr: I feel a very strong connection to Canada, especially Acadian culture. It really helps that my parents still live in Madawaska, which was the border town I grew up in, so I'm able to visit pretty often. My mom is originally from Edmundston, NB, so we spent a lot of time in Canada growing up and we spoke French with our immediate and extended family. I have very fond memories of Canada—camping when I was a kid in the summer and spending tons of time snowboarding in the winter. In high school, we'd walk across the border and drink cheap beer. And, then there are things like Poutine, Ketchup Yum Yum chips, and Jos Louis that I always manage to eat when I visit.

BBB: The east coast is known to have a particular vibe to it, do you feel it has the same feeling in both countries?

KC: I think the East Coast has a no-nonsense vibe; a get-shit-done attitude. And, from what I can tell Canada's East Coast seems the same, at least Quebec seems that way to me.

BBB: How do you feel the east coast compares to that of other areas such as the mid-west or coast?

KC: I don't think I could live anywhere but the Northeast. The Midwest is too polite and the West Coast is way too laid back for me. I go crazy in California. It just doesn't work for me; somehow everyones' chill attitude makes me even more uptight. I can't even imagine what it would be like in the South.

BBB: Growing up in a paper mill town, how did this help shape your development as an artist and an individual?

KC: It certainly helped inform

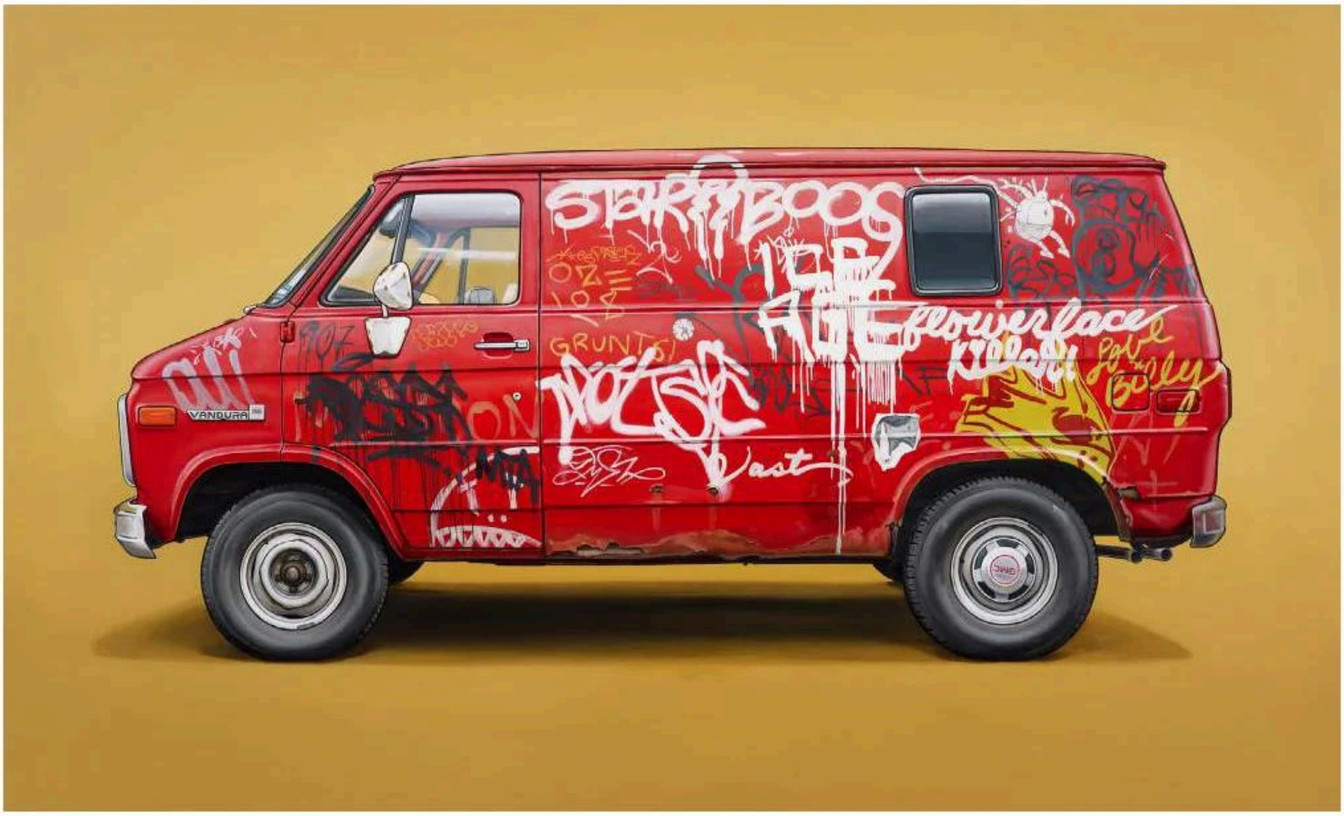
my politics and outlook on life. Madawaska is a very blue-collar and very Democratic town. I always thought people worked really hard and took pride in their work. I try to emulate those traits in my work. The subject matter of work vehicles is a way for me to represent hard work as well as a way to talk about place and class.

BBB: As an artist who received a BFA, did you feel that artist education was an integral part in your success?

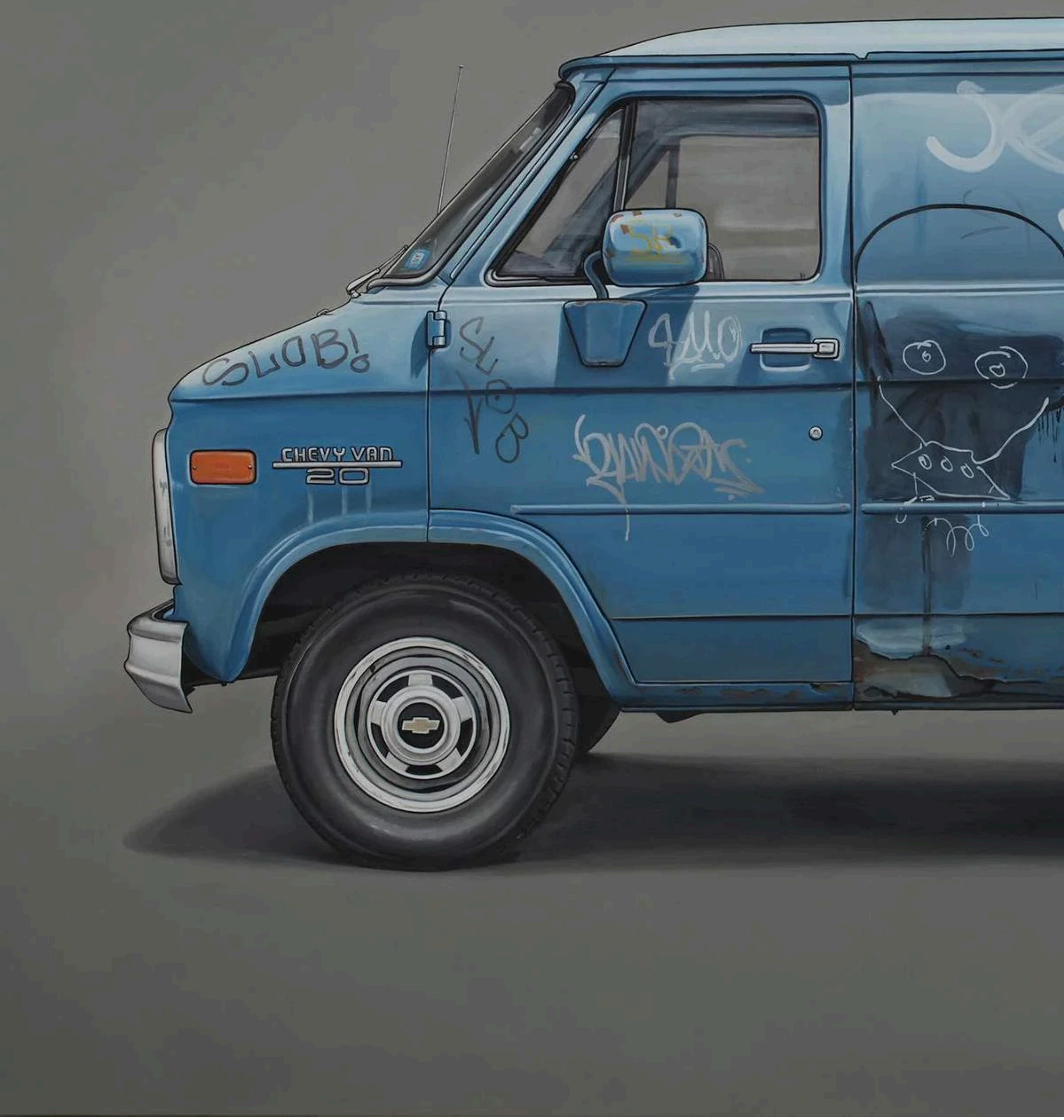
KC: I think it gave me a good start. Without the experience of college I think it would have been much harder to begin my career as an artist. I went to Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and received a BFA in Illustration. It was a pretty intense curriculum, but I managed to make paintings on the side and have apartment art shows with friends. The course load really forced me to establish a good work ethic early on. By the time I graduated, I had established a solid routine so I was able to create projects for myself and really focus on painting.

BBB: As an artist who has exhibited and traveled throughout the world, how have you utilized these experiences as inspiration in your work?

KC: I was lucky to travel to Beijing a few times for work and the trips there became somewhat of a turning point for me. It was there that I saw how the working-class culture utilize three-wheeled bicycles. And, it became the inspiration for a vehicle-based sculpture project I titled, Camper Bike. It began as a drawing and a painting project that quickly developed into a three-dimensional piece. The piece was purchased by a corporate collection in Lille, France where it was exhibited before traveling to other locations across Europe. I've since



> AS A PRACTICE, IT IS VERY NARCISSISTIC; TO TAG UP SOMEONE ELSE'S VEHICLE IS PRETTY AUDACIOUS.


SLOB!
CHEVY VAN
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made a few more large-scale, sculptural works and I have a couple more on the drawing table. The vehicle paintings were something I started while living in Boston. As I traveled to different states and countries I realized each place has a different type of vehicle that is emblematic for the culture. The RVs in California; the graffiti-covered working vans of New York City; and the rickshaws of India.

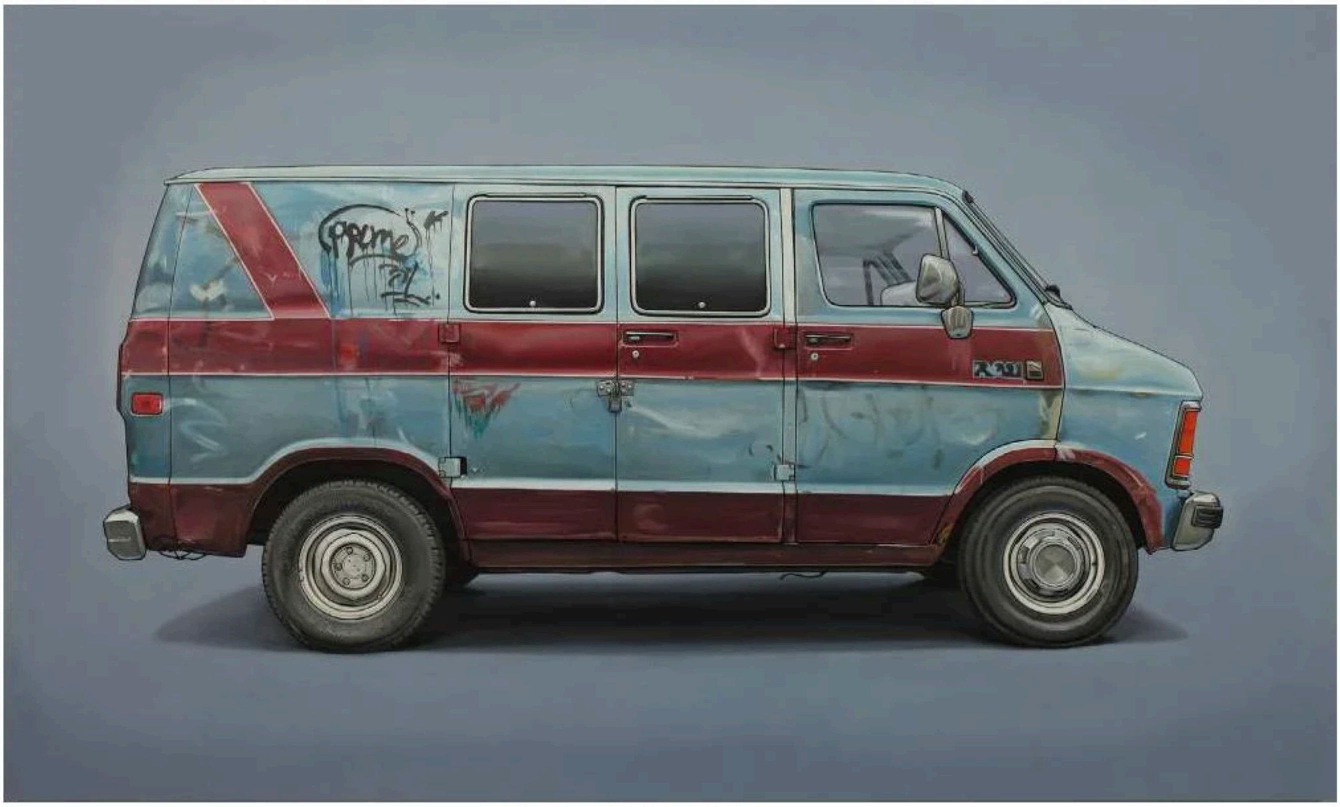
BBB: Much of your work incorporates vehicular landscapes, what are the primary elements about the American auto industry that fascinates you?

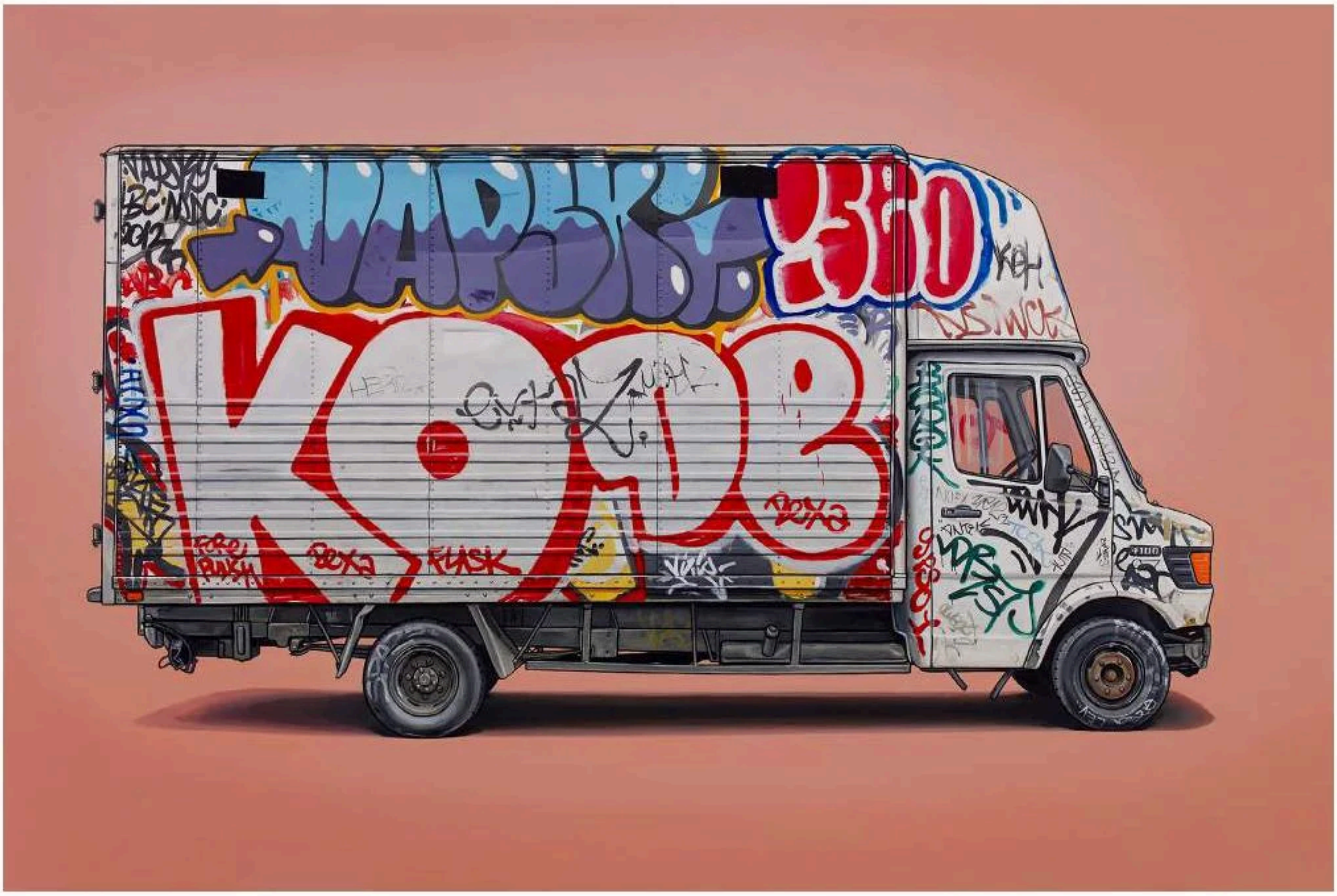
KC: It's not so much the American auto industry that I'm fascinated with, but the people who drive them and how the vehicle's facade can communicate where they are from or what they're used for. It's not often that I get to meet a vehicle's owner, but it makes the painting even more interesting for me when I do. I asked permission to photograph a man's Ford Econoline—his name was Eduardo and he told me he had bought his van for $300 and then the following day made $700 moving stuff—twelve years later and he was still making money with his van. "Never buy a vehicle that won't make you money." He told me.

BBB: Many of your works incorporate the use of graffiti on the vehicles, what are your thoughts on graffiti as a practice?

KC: As a practice, it is very narcissistic; to tag up someone else's vehicle is pretty audacious. But visually, I think it's like any other expressive art form. I had been painting vehicles for a long time before moving to New York. Seeing graffiti on vans added a whole new layer of meaning to the vehicles. They became much more about an urban place and culture while retaining the underlining themes of the working-class.

BBB: You've are represented by prestigious galleries such as

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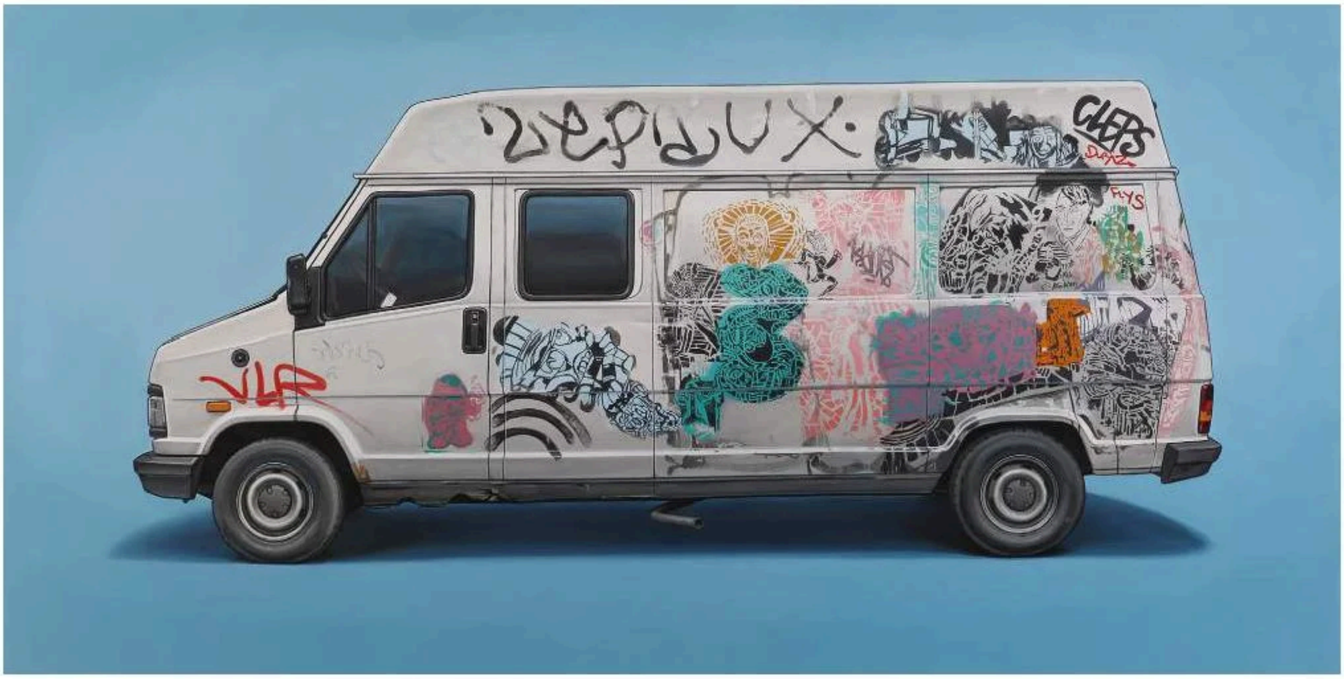
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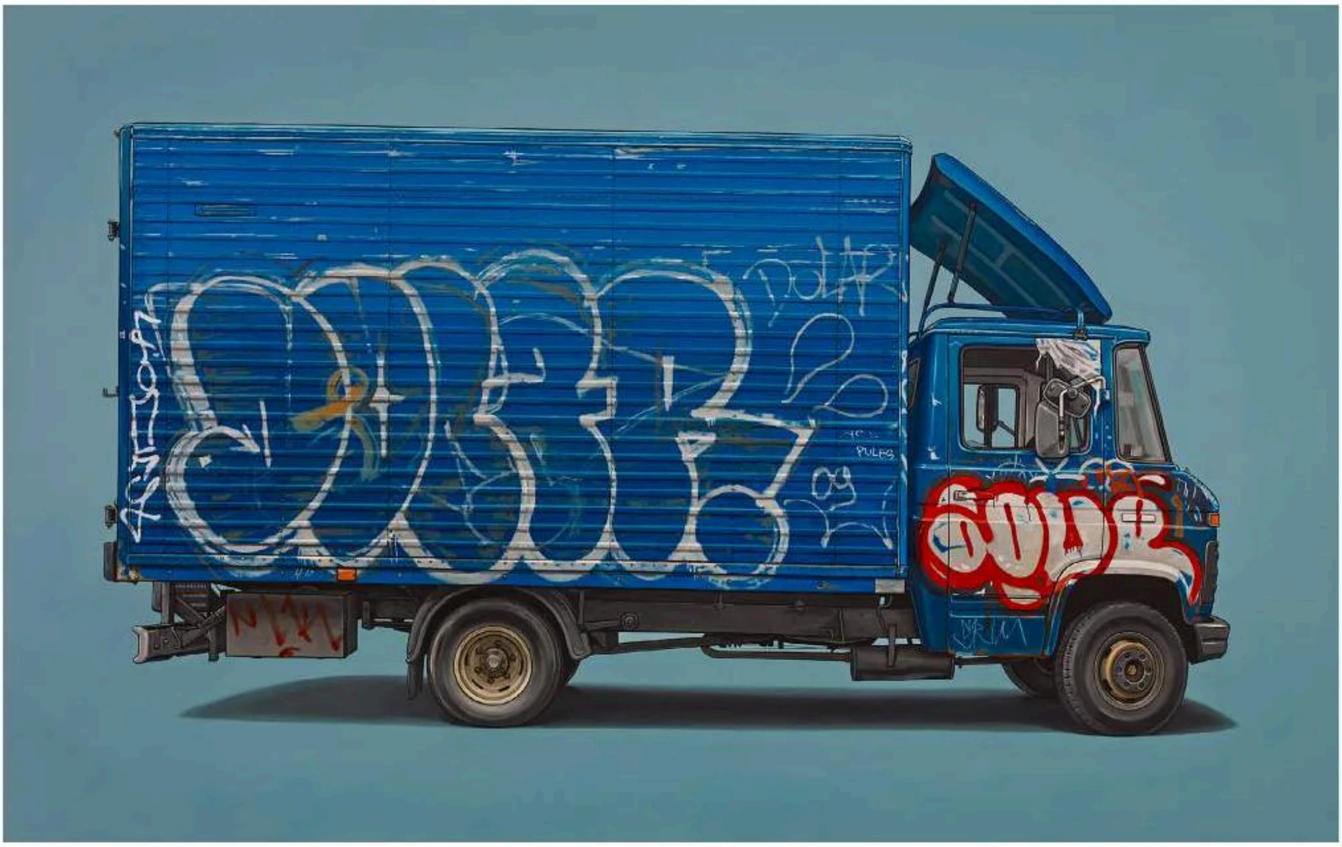

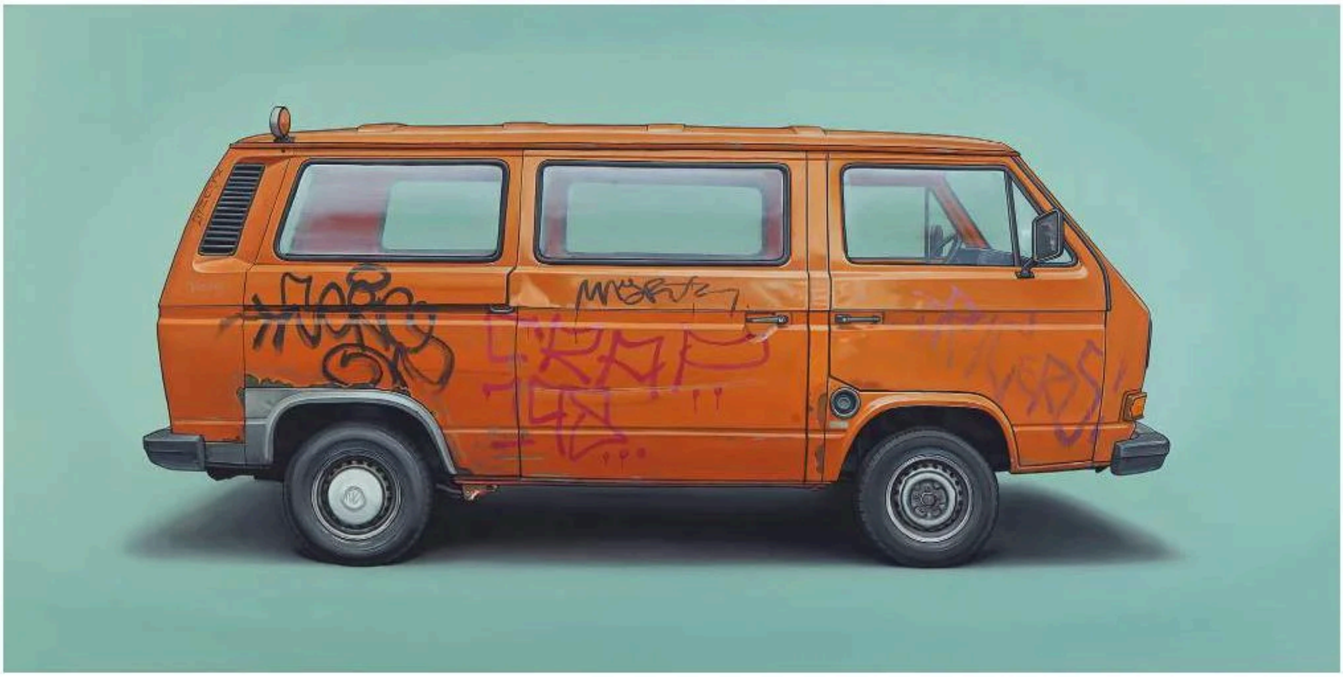

White Walls & Shooting Gallery, what does it mean to you to be represented by them?

KC: I got my start at White Walls Gallery and the couple of shows I had with them propelled me to becoming a full-time artist. So, for that, I'll always be grateful for showing there. I am currently represented by Jonathan LeVine Gallery in New York which is a perfect fit for the type of work I'm making. He has a great roster of artists and it's really nice to be among them.

BBB: You have a group show coming up at the Yves Laroche Gallery in Montreal, what does it mean to be showing there again?

KC: I'm thrilled to be showing with Yves Laroche again, especially in this group show with so many great artists. It's really nice to be showing in a French Canadian gallery—I feel an extra sense of belonging with my French Canadian last name.

BBB: The show revolves around the idea of "Égrégore", how would you define this term and how does it play a role in your practice?

KC: With a group of more than fifty artists creating work for "Égrégore" there is sure to be an inspiring energy at the show. Each individual artists work shares their perspective of the world and contributes to the larger collective consciousness. For me, it's a nebulous concept, but one that I understand as a feeling or impression.

BBB: As an artist with a heavy workload on his plate, what can our readers be on the lookout from Kevin Cyr in the coming years?

KC: I have an upcoming show at Urban Nation in Berlin that was curated by Jonathan LeVine and beyond that a couple of group shows and art fairs planned with the gallery. I've been invited to visit Cuba in the spring which I'm really excited about. The government recently ended the embargo against the import of cars there, so although it will be a long time before there's an influx of foreign cars, I would like to document Cuba's old vehicles. I also have a couple of three-dimensional projects that I started during a residency at The Wassaic Project that I would like to continue.

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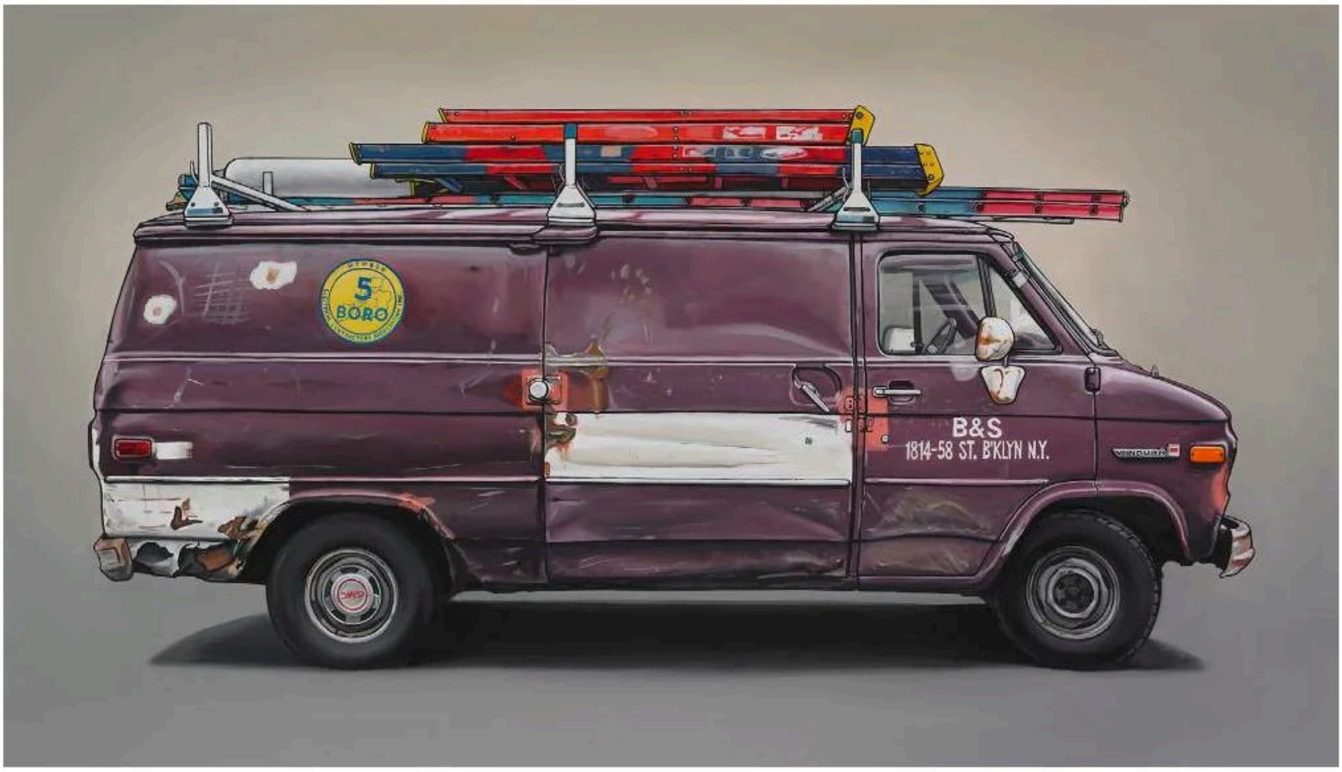
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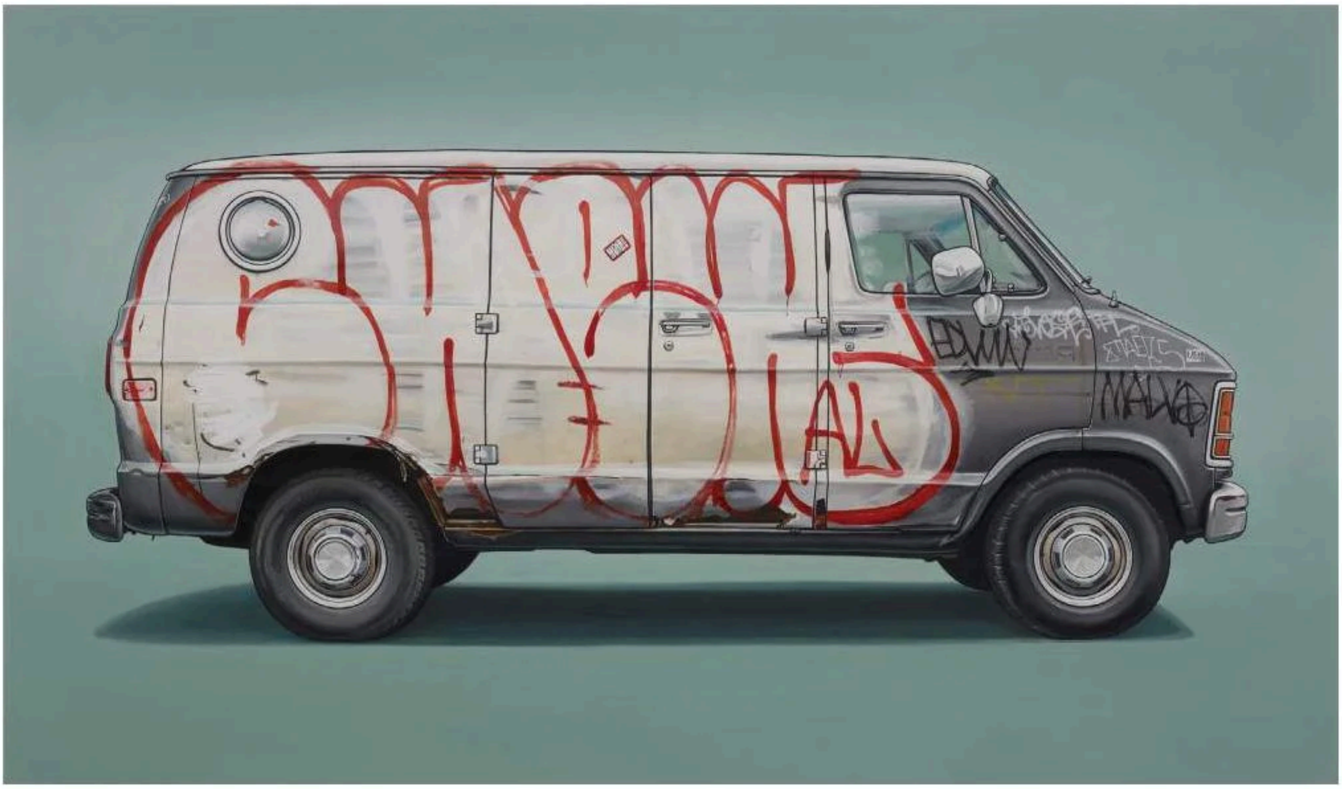
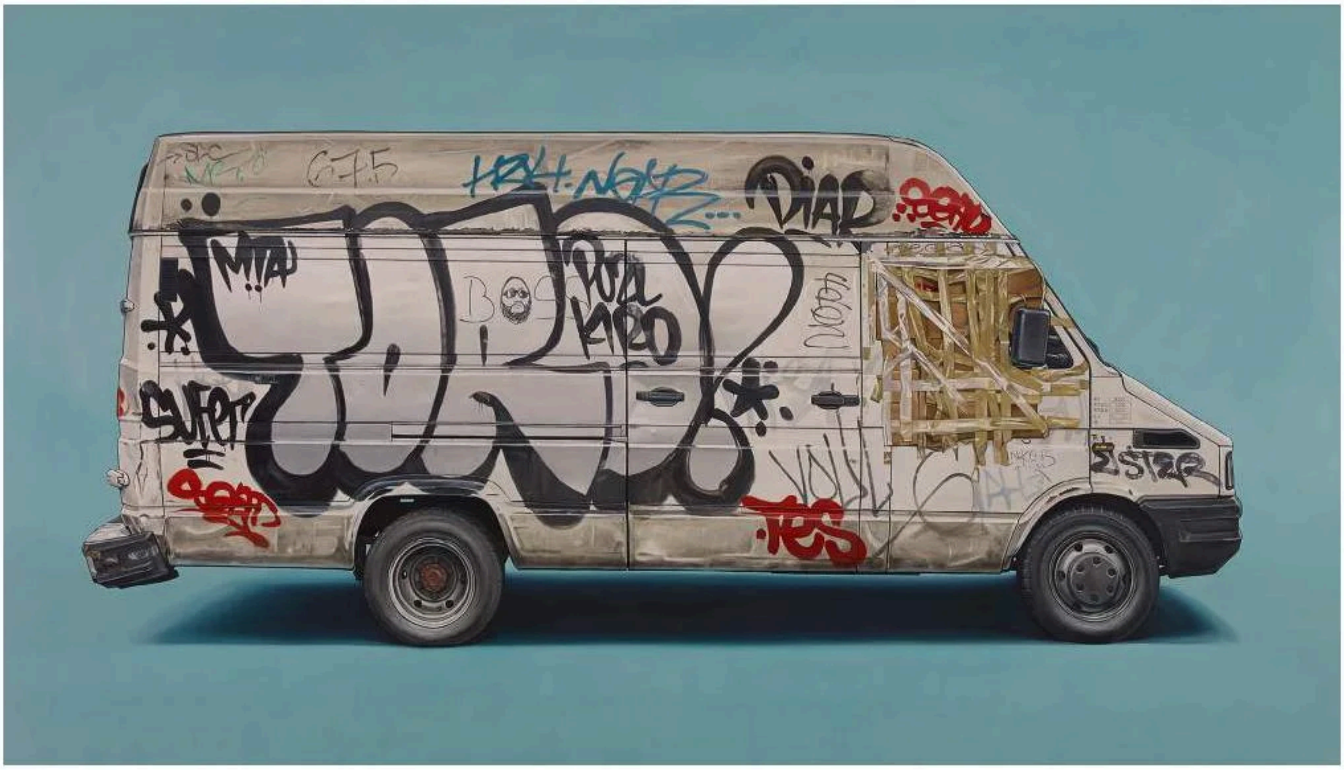
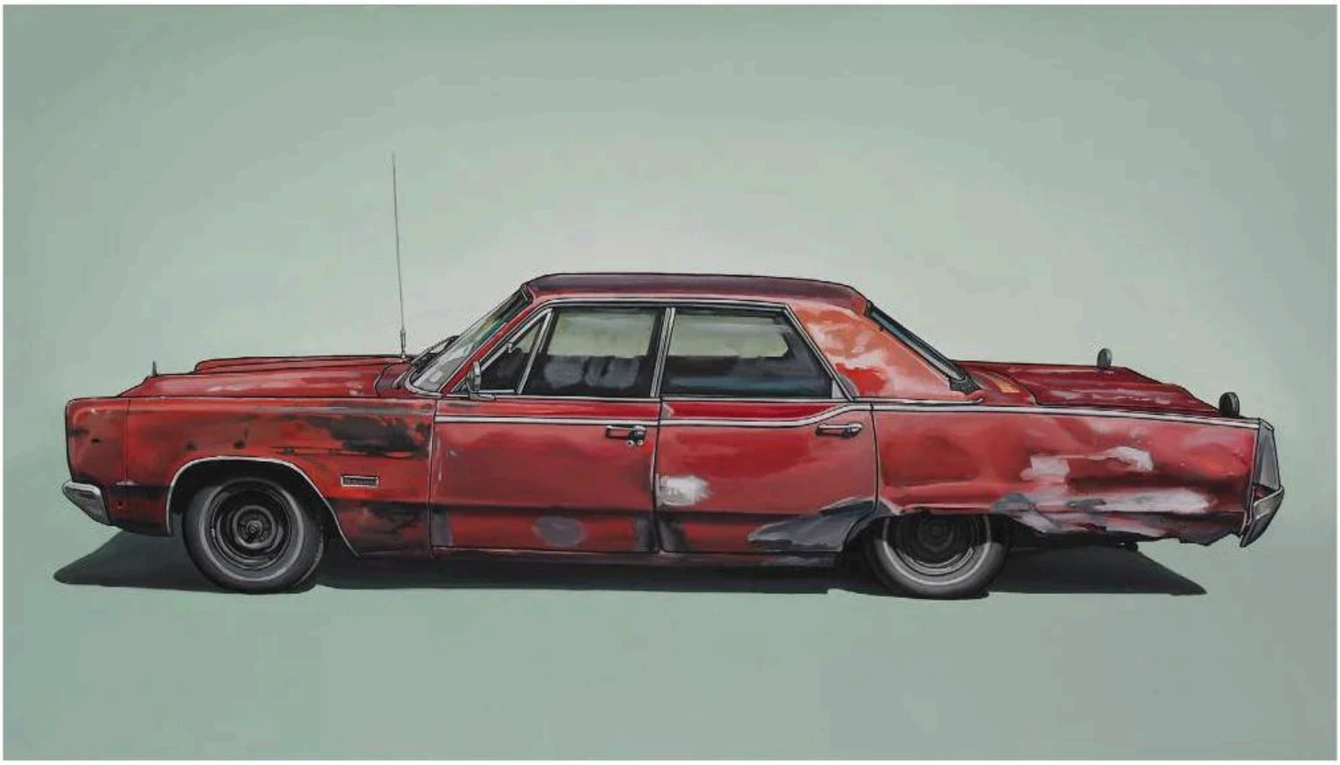
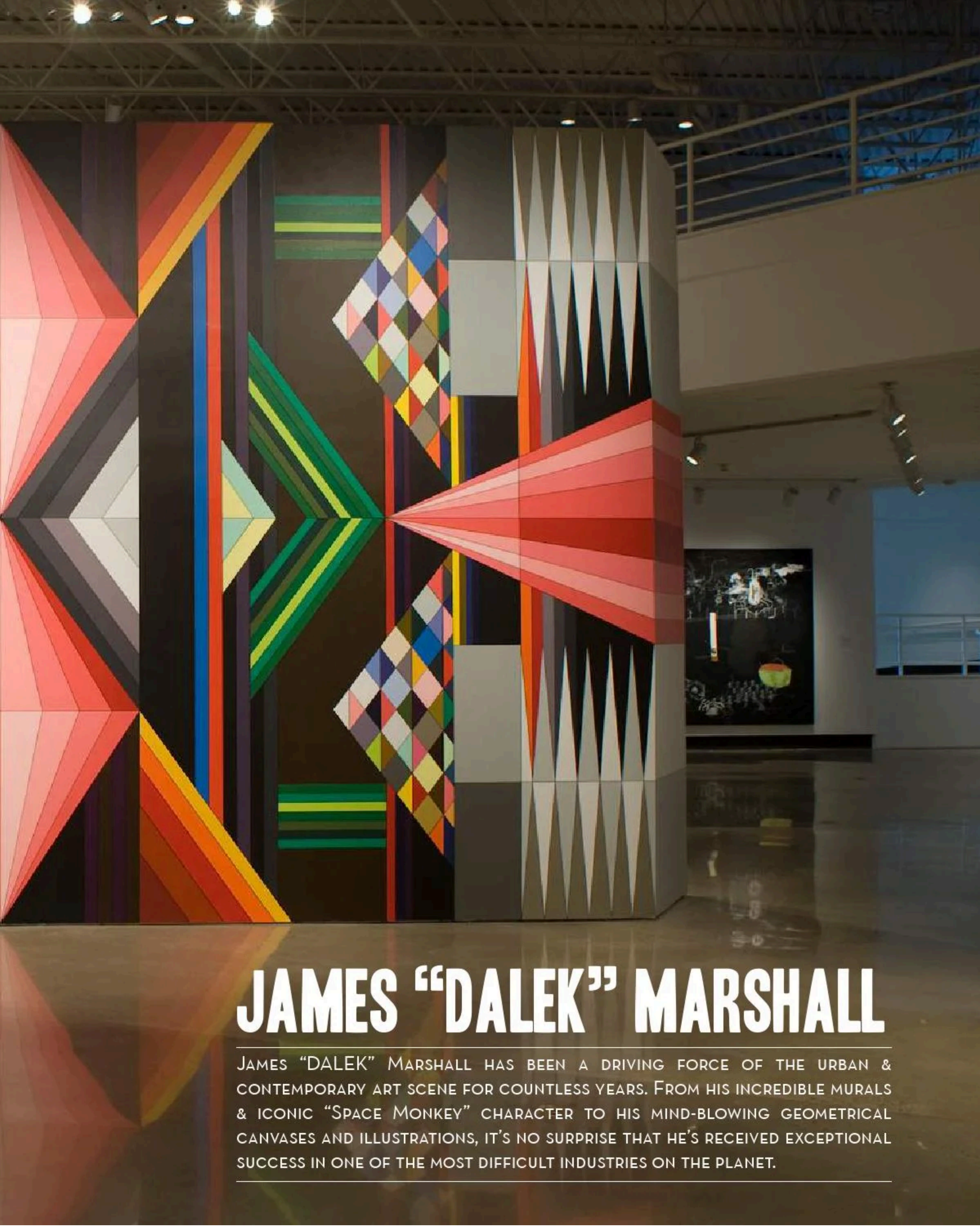








JAMES "DALEK" MARSHALL

James "DALEK" Marshall has been a driving force of the urban & contemporary art scene for countless years. From his incredible murals & iconic "Space Monkey" character to his mind-blowing geometrical canvases and illustrations, it's no surprise that he's received exceptional success in one of the most difficult industries on the planet.

Bizarre Beyond Belief: As a boy growing up in a military household, how did that affect your development as a child?

Dalek: We moved a lot. That was the main thing I guess, a lot of upheaval. Settling and resettling in new towns with new people. So, the pros I guess are adaptability and self sufficiency but I tend to be a pretty internal person.

BBB: We've read you've turned to skateboarding and graffiti as a youth, how did your family react to such polar opposite cultures?

Dalek: They were pretty cool with it. It definitely wasn't anything they were in the know on, but they were understanding and encouraging for the most part.

BBB: What was it about these sub-cultures that fascinated you immerse yourself in the scene?

Dalek: Moving as much as I did, the one thing about those sub-cultures was that I could go anywhere and link into those communities pretty easily. It was a way to connect and stay connected while constantly moving around. It was just a natural connection with a group of people that I could relate to. They were forms of expression that fit my energy and typical teenage angst. They were (and are) communities that move past a lot of the typical "isms" of the world.

BBB: What did these sub-cultures

give you that no other communities could?

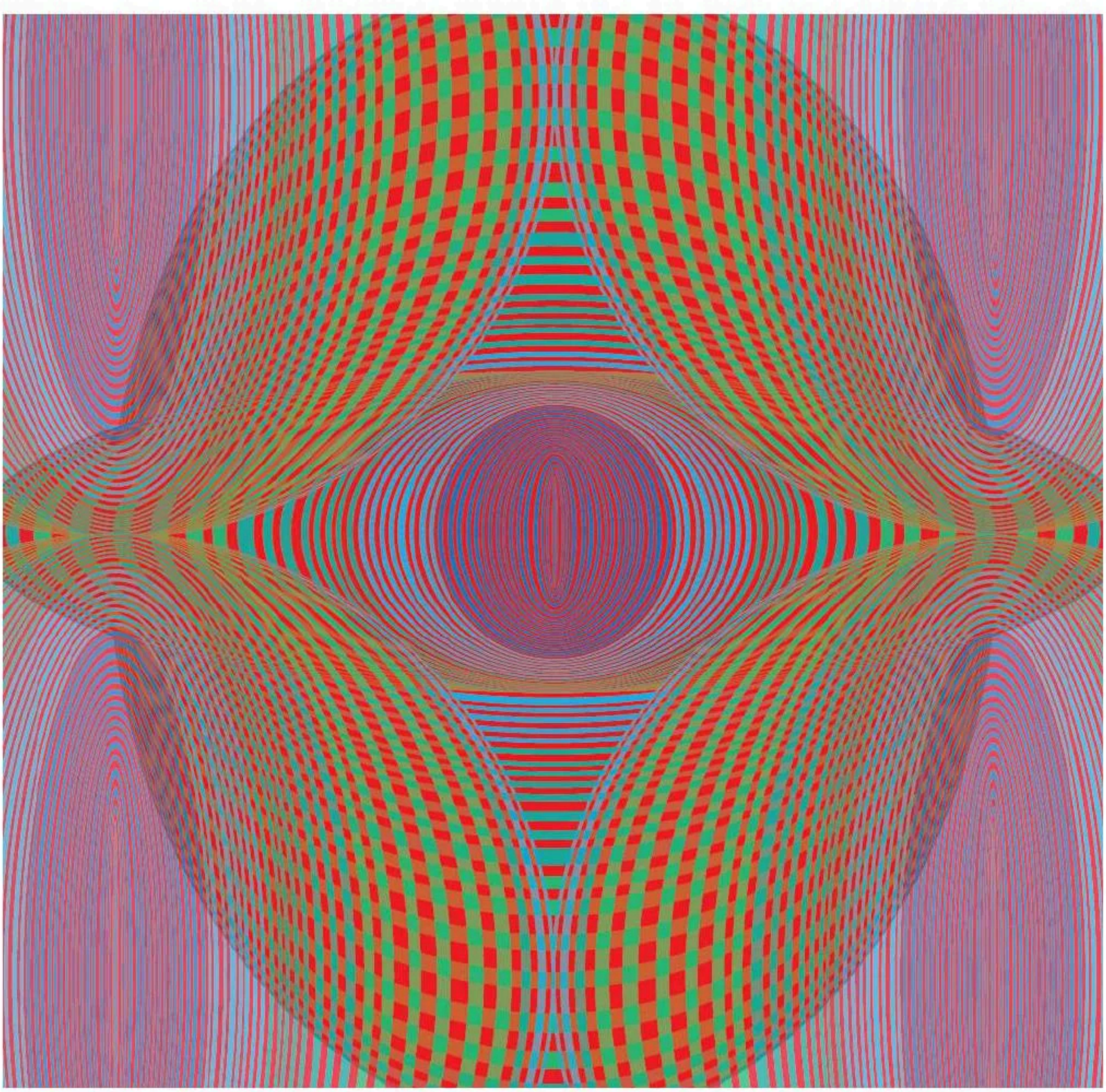
Dalek: : I'd say the main thing was they gave stability and acceptance, as well as the challenges of learning the skill sets within. I gained a lot of experiences through those subcultures that have served me well ever since (I began), not to mention a lot of great friends.

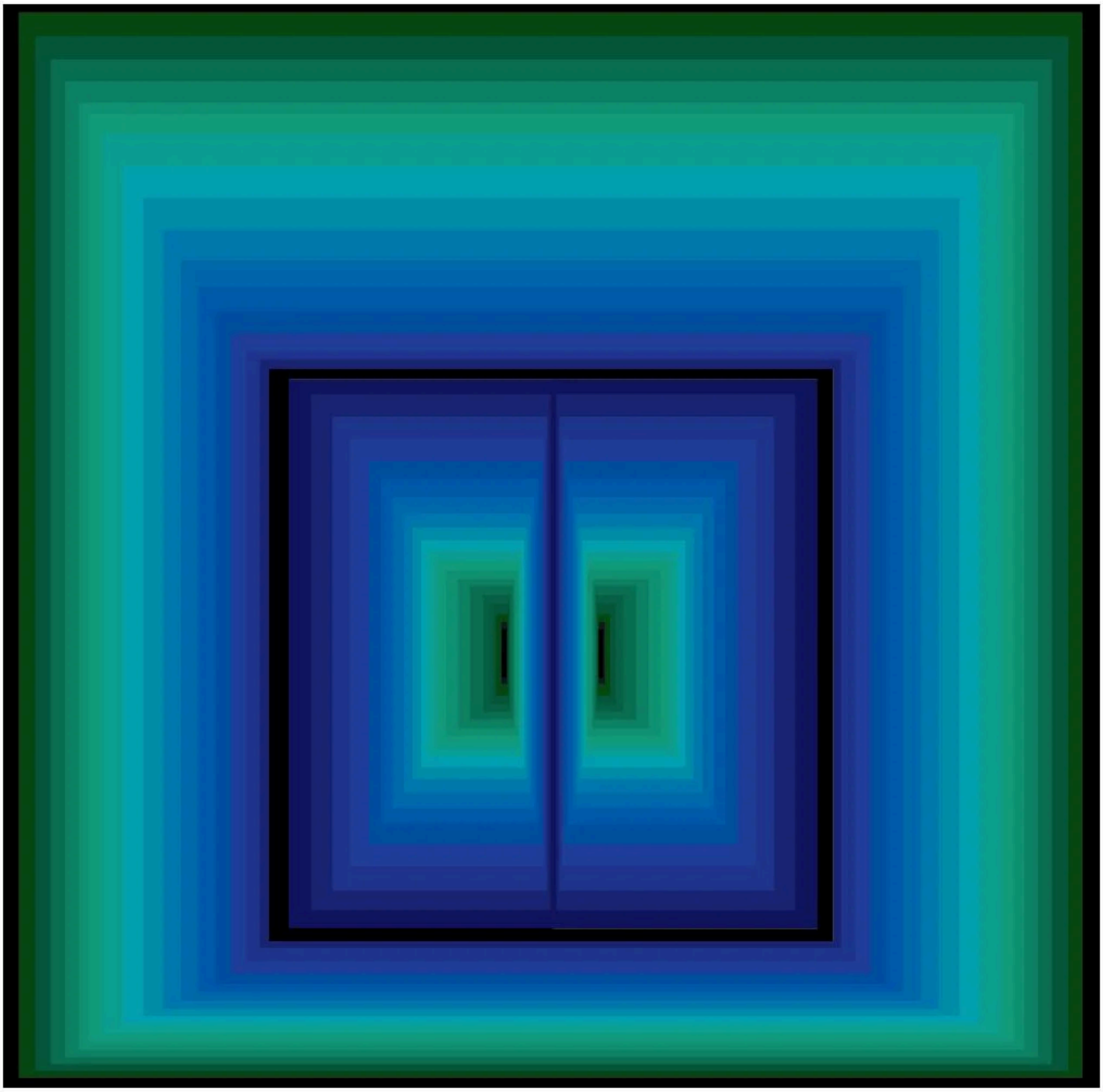
BBB: The graffiti culture is often thought to be rooted in hip-hop, however, we understand you turned to punk rock, what was it about punk rock that captivated you?

Dalek: Well, punk was synonymous with skateboarding in the early 80's, so those two things came in tandem for me. The energy of both were aligned perfectly. If you go back to the roots of hip-hop though, you'll see that it was pretty punk in its own right. They pretty much developed side by side in a lot of ways in NY in the late 70's. When I did get into hip-hop it wasn't a leap at all. The energy and attitude mirrored each other. As far as what was captivating (or whats captivating about anything at that age) was simply it was a voice that was closer to my own. It was accessible and it was easy to connect and relate to.

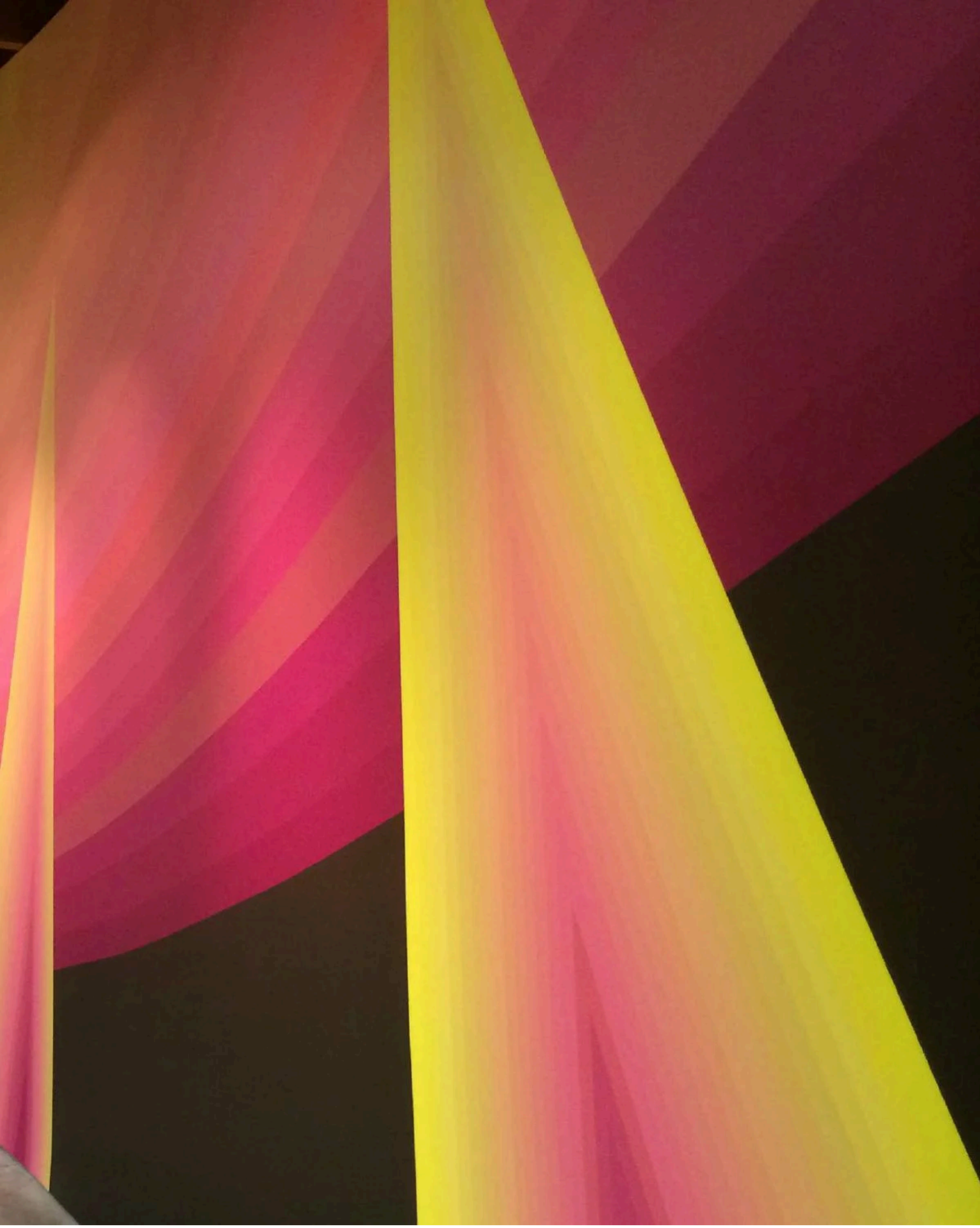
BBB: As an educated individual, what was the motivation for the jump from the degree in the liberal arts to the fine-arts?

Dalek: It's all building blocks. I am sure





> I WAS DOWN FOR ANYTHING THAT WANTED TO WIPE OUT HUMANITY OR AT LEAST EDIT IT DOWN A BIT.



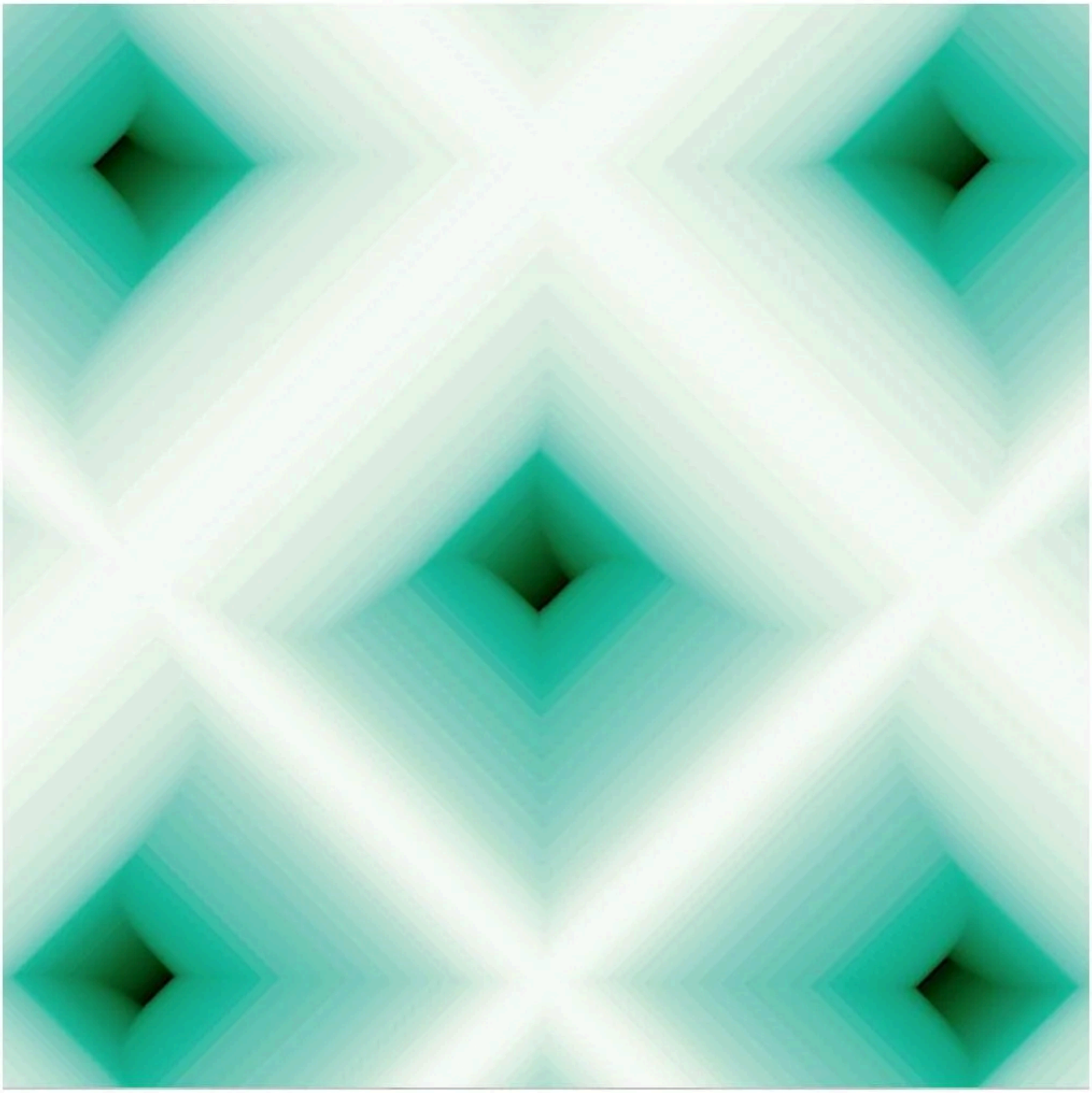
I could stand to go back to school and get a few more degrees and maybe I will if time allows it. I was always interested in photography and namely photographing the scenes I was a part of. So, understanding anthropology and sociology was natural for me and then to get a degree in photography to learn how to express my connection to those things in a visual manner would just be the next step.

BBB: How did you develop your name DALEK and the Space Monkey character and what are their significance to you?

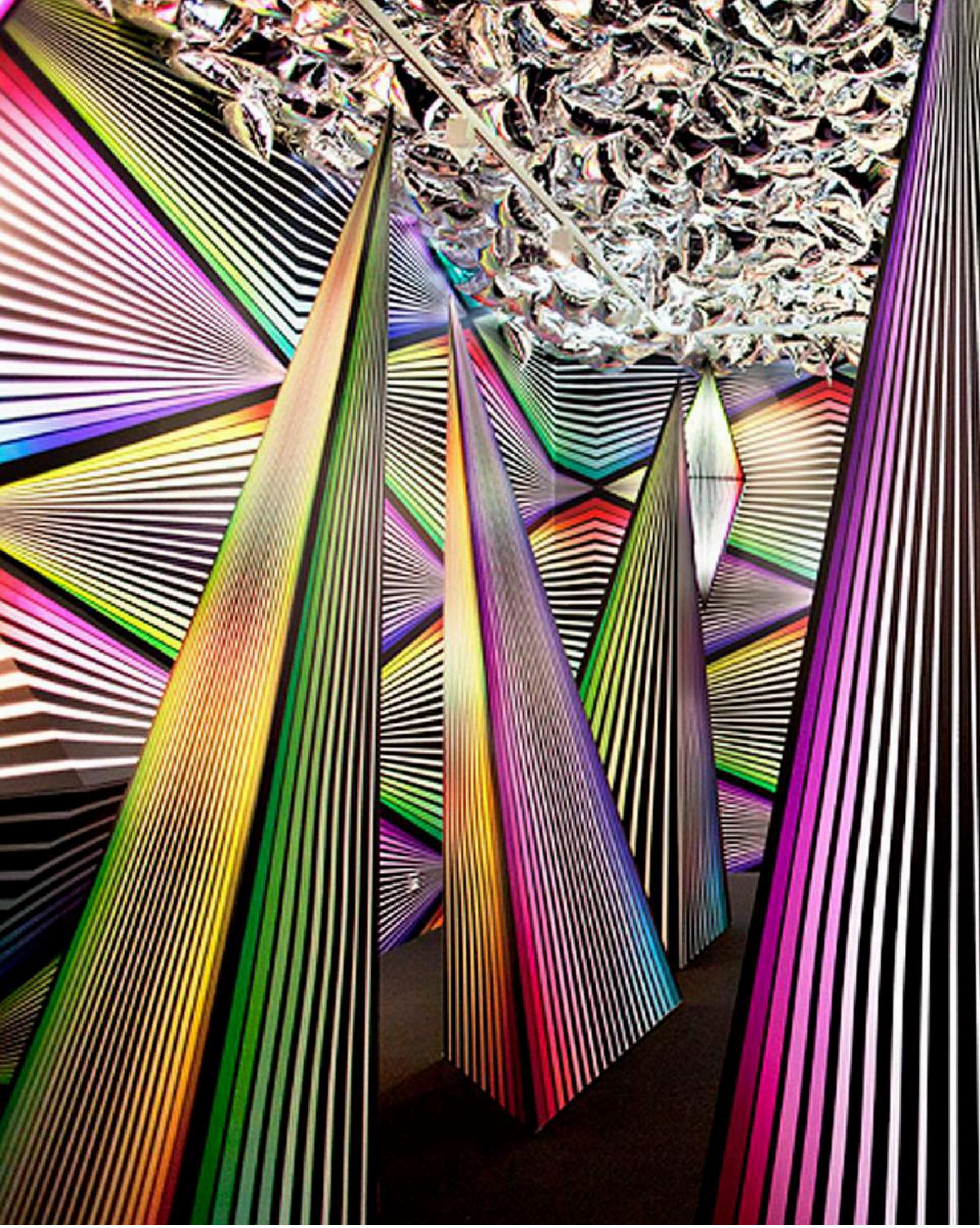
Dalek: I watched a lot of "Dr. Who" growing up. I always enjoyed "the Daleks." I was down for anything that wanted to wipe out humanity or at least edit it down a bit. The space monkey was an evolution. I doodled a lot of random characters. When I got into graffiti I struggled a lot with letters, meaning there wasn't any natural draw for me to want to do them. I was far more interested in developing these character ideas so I just sort of started pushing in that direction and slowly the space monkey rose up out of that.

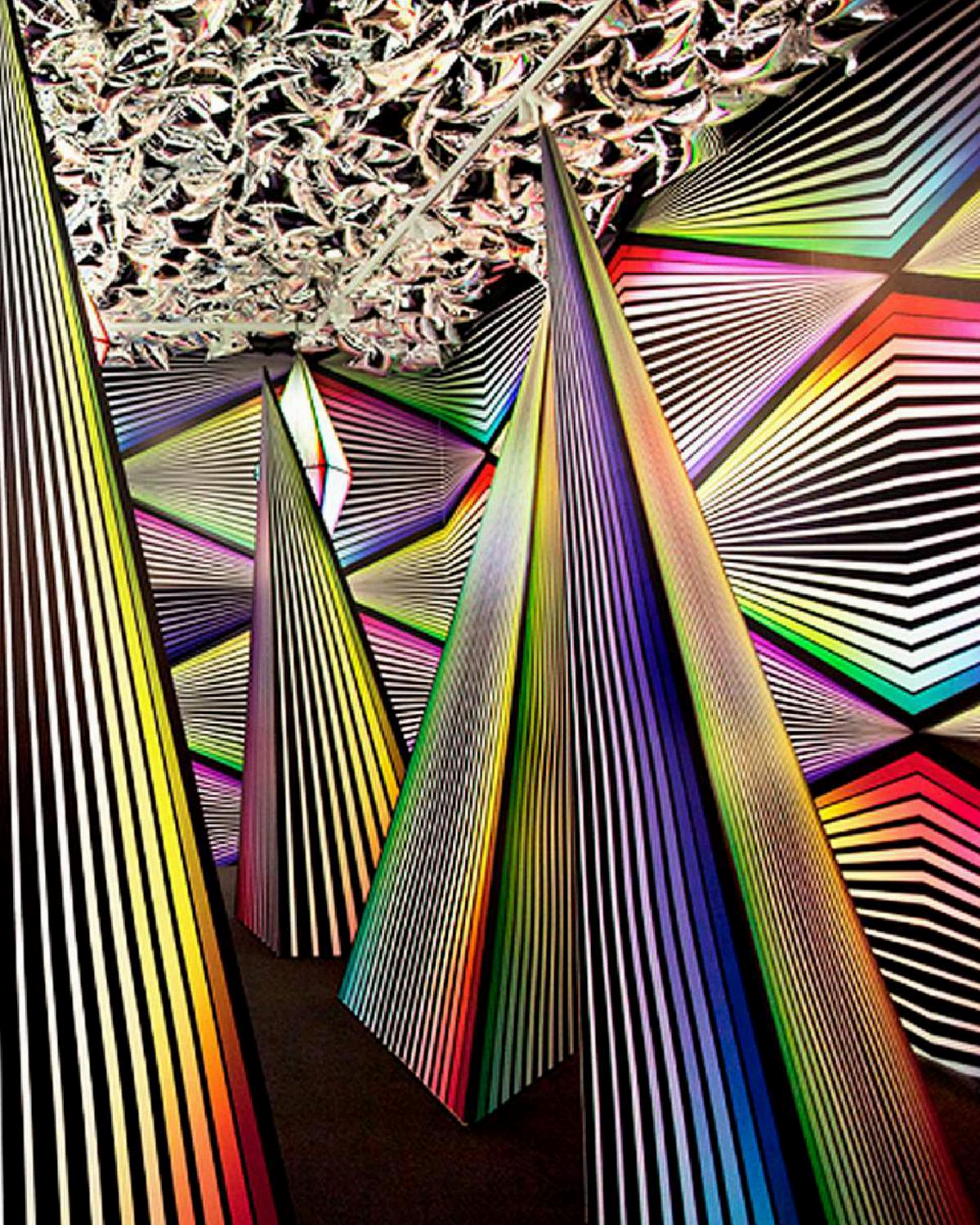
BBB: How did your Space Monkey translate messages or thoughts that no other metaphor could?

Dalek: It was just simple, silly, and easy to manipulate which was perfect for relaying ideas. It was an empty vessel. The space monkey name was something that came up between my friend Jason and I one day in the early



days of drawing/painting the character. The basis of the conversation was about humans and technology. Something that even in the early 90's seemed to be on a dangerous slope. Now it's even funnier to think about. As we talked about humans being reduced to button pushers, we talked about training monkeys to go into space and push buttons. Hence space monkeys. So, as we slowly slip deeper into being space monkeys I am sure the character will resurface to lead us into the void





BBB: You've worked as Takashi Murakami's assistant, how did such an impressive role develop your artistic practice?

Dalek: The main thing I got from working there at the studio was learning a studio practice. It just helped me understand how to create some organization and a game plan. I had no concept on how to direct and grow what I was doing at that point, so that experience just helped push me into a growth model. This has now allowed me to develop my work the way that I have.

BBB: Do you believe this was an integral step in your success as an artist?

Dalek: It was huge. In the sense that it gave me a glimpse into purpose and direction.

BBB: With your practice rooted in minimalism, what was the turning point in your career to create hyper-colourful and extremely stimulating art work?

Dalek: I don't know what the turning point would have been. I find that the growth periods in my work come from times when I feel like I've hit a dead end. Times where I feel like I've sort of taken something as far as it can go. The frustration allows a disassembly of all those things and then a new direction or evolution comes out of that. I think you can look back at my work from the beginning and see the connection or the thread. It's just as I learn and figure things out, I gain new skill sets, which makes me better able to express ideas and of course ideas are always changing and growing. It's all part of the process.

BBB: As an artist who's exhibited in exceptional galleries all over, what other goals or achievements are you looking to attain?

Dalek: The only goal is to keep working and pushing forward and see where it goes. All I want to do is to learn to be a better artist, and in a perfect world, I'll be making my best work 30 years from now.

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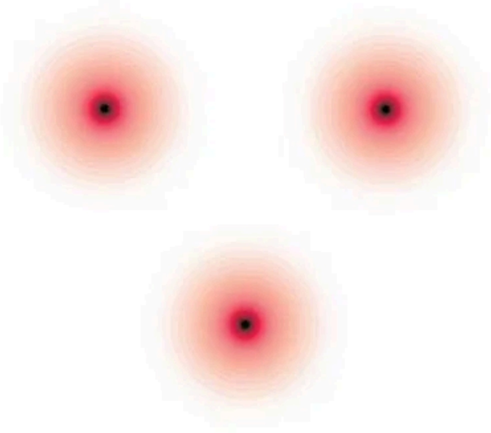
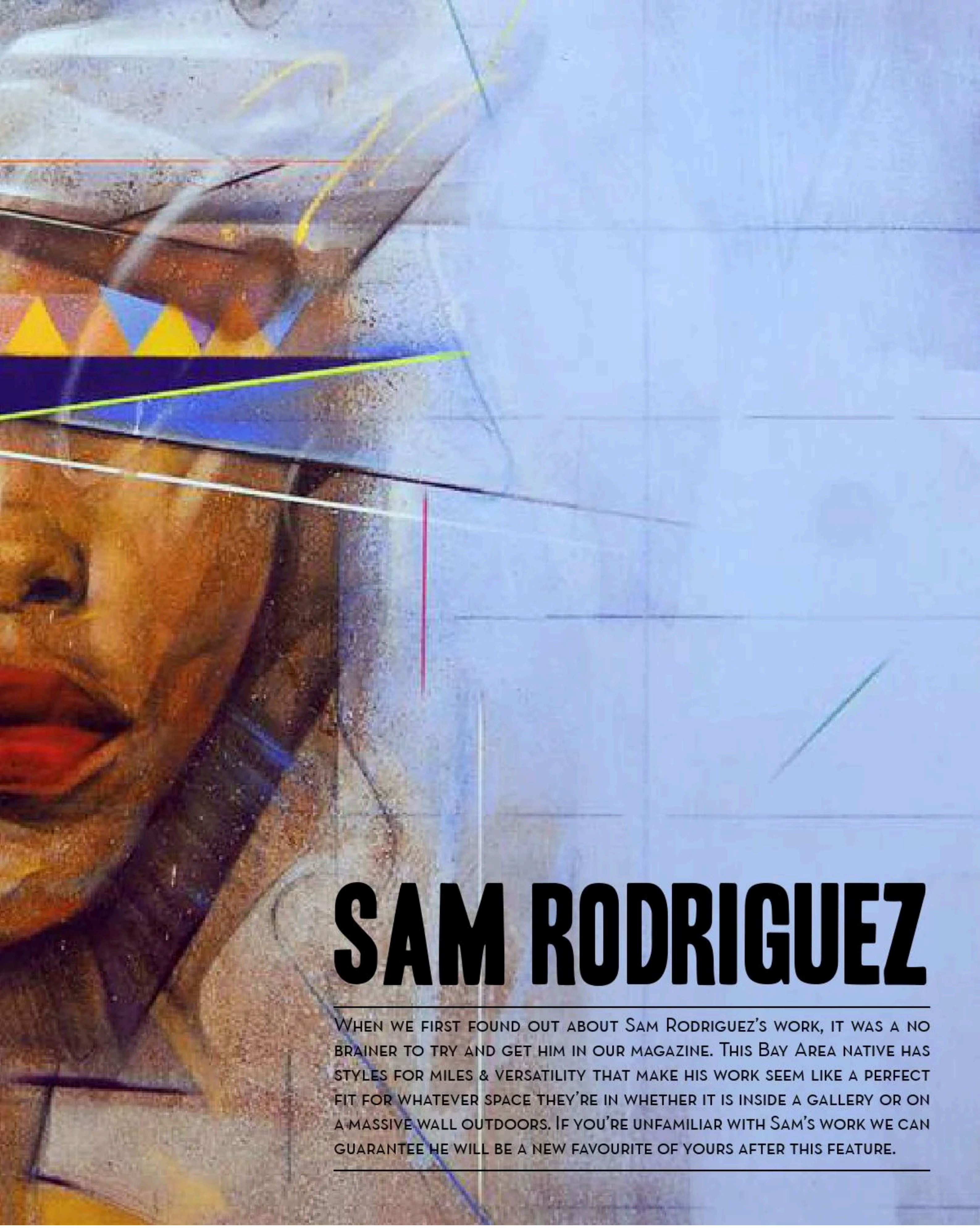
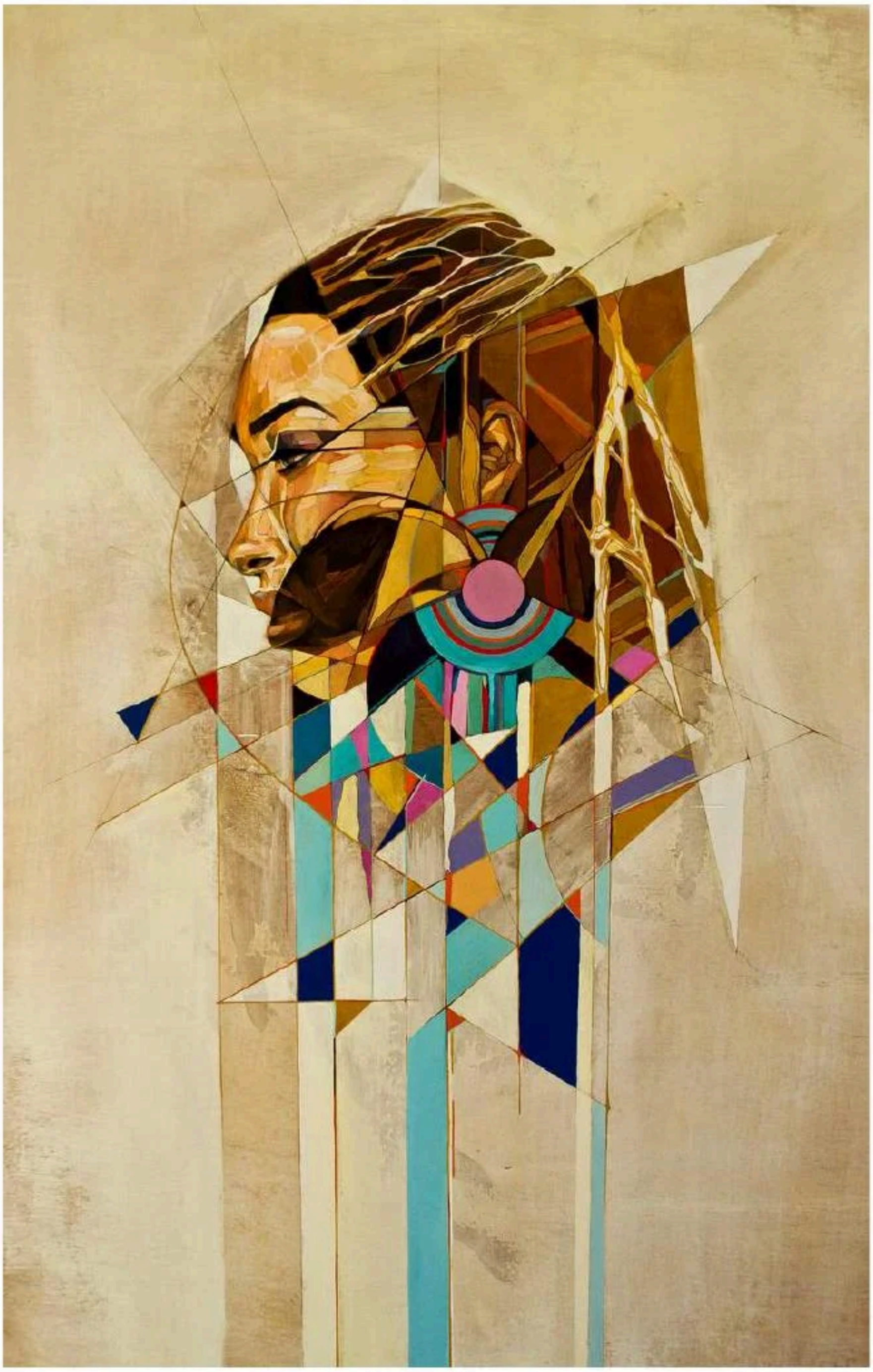




SAM RODRIGUEZ

When we first found out about Sam Rodriguez's work, it was a no brainer to try and get him in our magazine. This Bay Area native has styles for miles & versatility that make his work seem like a perfect fit for whatever space they're in whether it is inside a gallery or on a massive wall outdoors. If you're unfamiliar with Sam's work we can guarantee he will be a new favourite of yours after this feature.



Bizarre Beyond Belief: We know many people experience art as children, but did you know this was going to be a career for you?

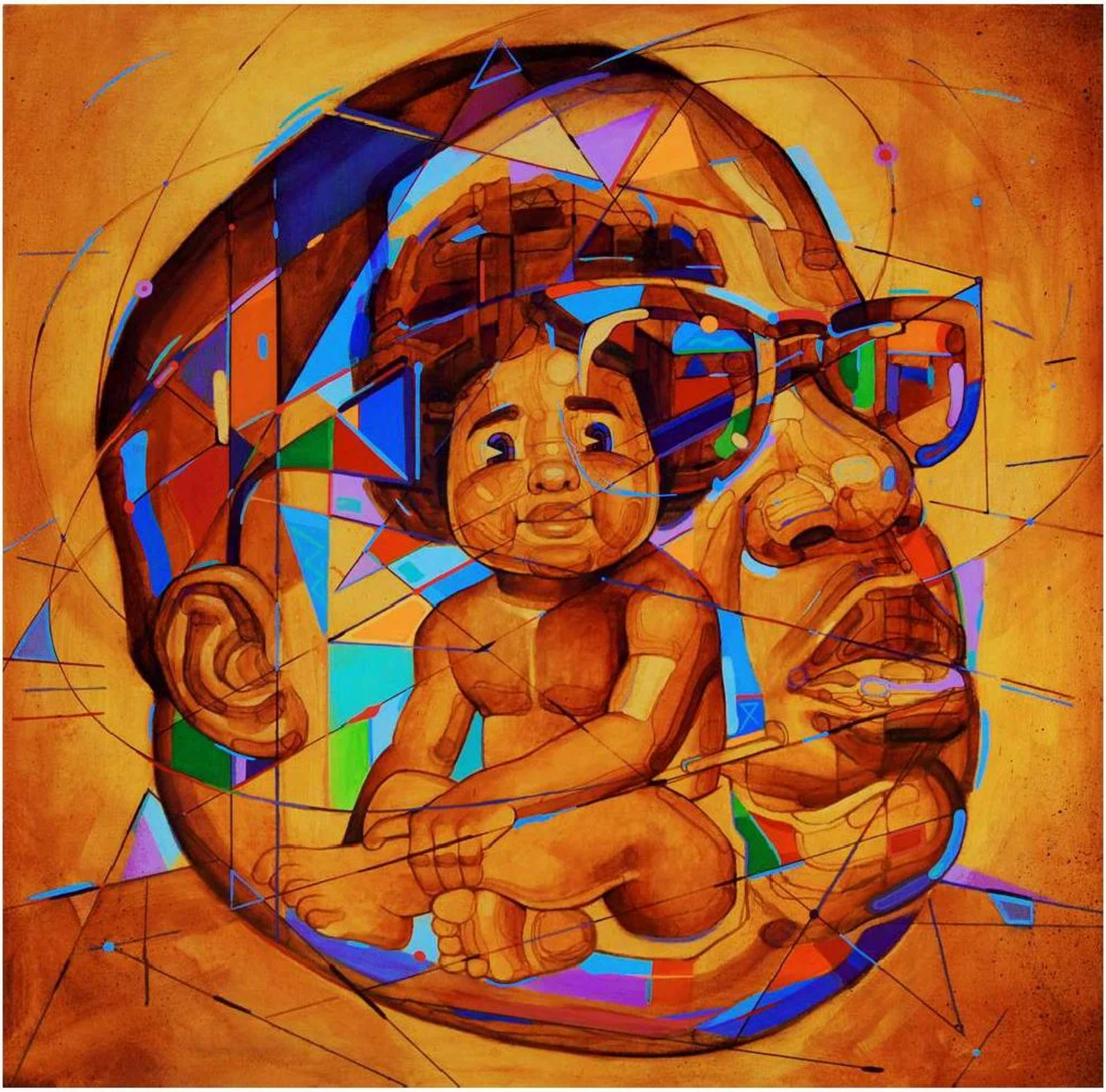
Sam Rodriguez: I didn't think a career as an artist was possible because I hadn't ever witnessed it growing up. So no. But career or not I always obsessed over it. I guess I took it day by day, in the past I didn't think too much about the future.

BBB: Your work beautiful blends portraiture and typography together, how did your artistic practice originate?

SR: I originally was a tagger and then a graffiti artist. Like any curious mind, I started taking notice to fine art and its history so I had to become a contributor. From that point I sort of transitioned away from graffiti and began exploring portraiture, graphic design, and other forms. But recently I have made an effort to really combine all of the things I like to see in art. To me the result is a battle of ideas and techniques which is okay because the challenge is to harmonize them.

BBB: How does socio-political issues affect your ideologies as an artist?

SR: Socio-Political issues affect all of us because they are about us. As an artist, I it's not enough to make something beautiful and decorative, that's just the beginning. I like how musicians deal with issues in their mediums so I try to aspire to achieve the same results. I am not saying you always have to be serious, but socio-political issues have a wide range and the bottom line is to be relevant. In my opinion, personal style mixed with relevance is essential to contributing new material to the evolution of art.



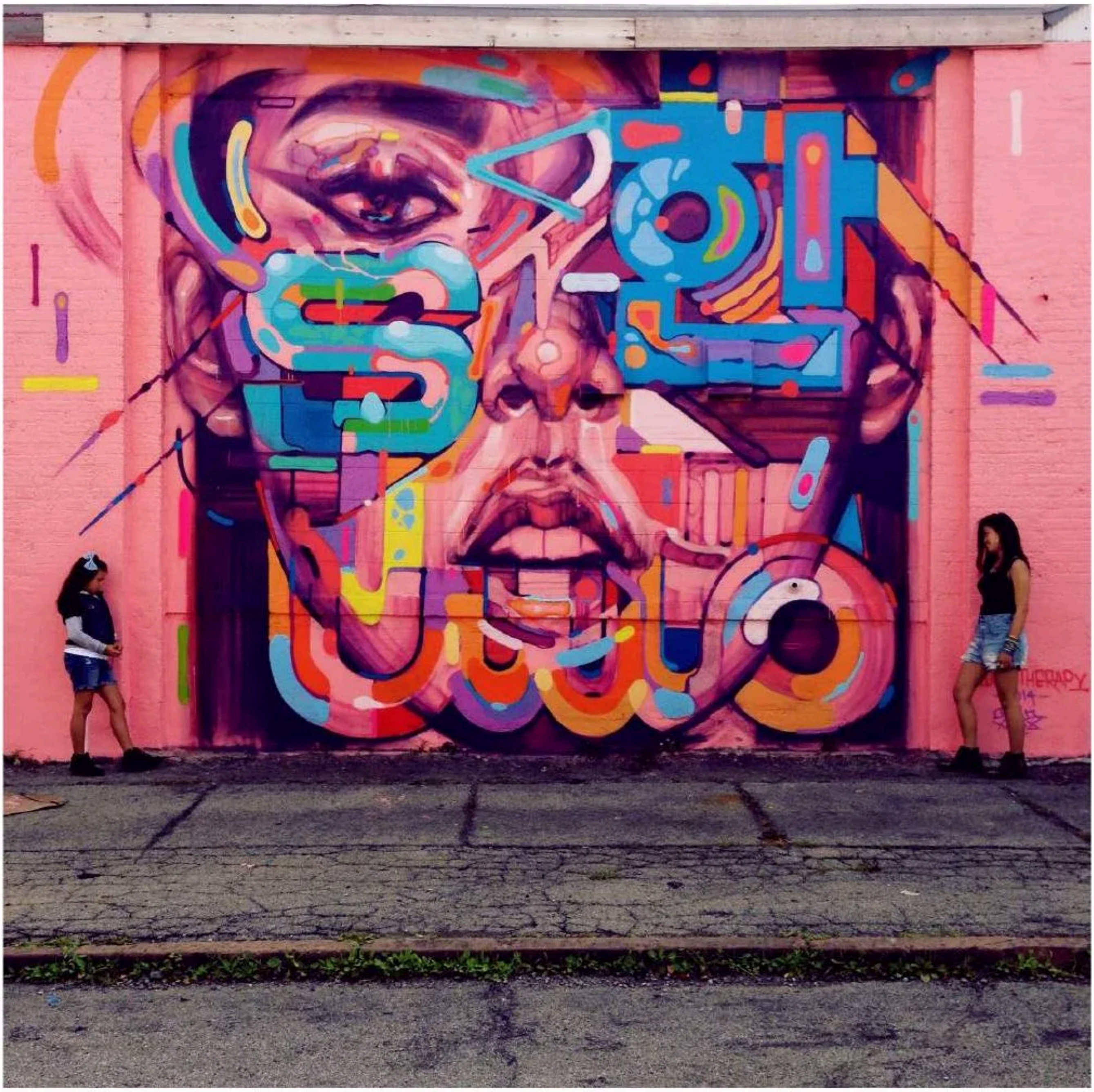
These are what make an artist or group original.

BBB: As an artist who works in a number of mediums such as design, murals and illustration, how does your approach differ between each field?

SR: The difference is the tools, scale and time frame. But the life of the pieces is the same.

BBB: As an artist who was originally self-taught and later received an education, what was the primary reason for the tutelage?

SR: I was self-taught but came to



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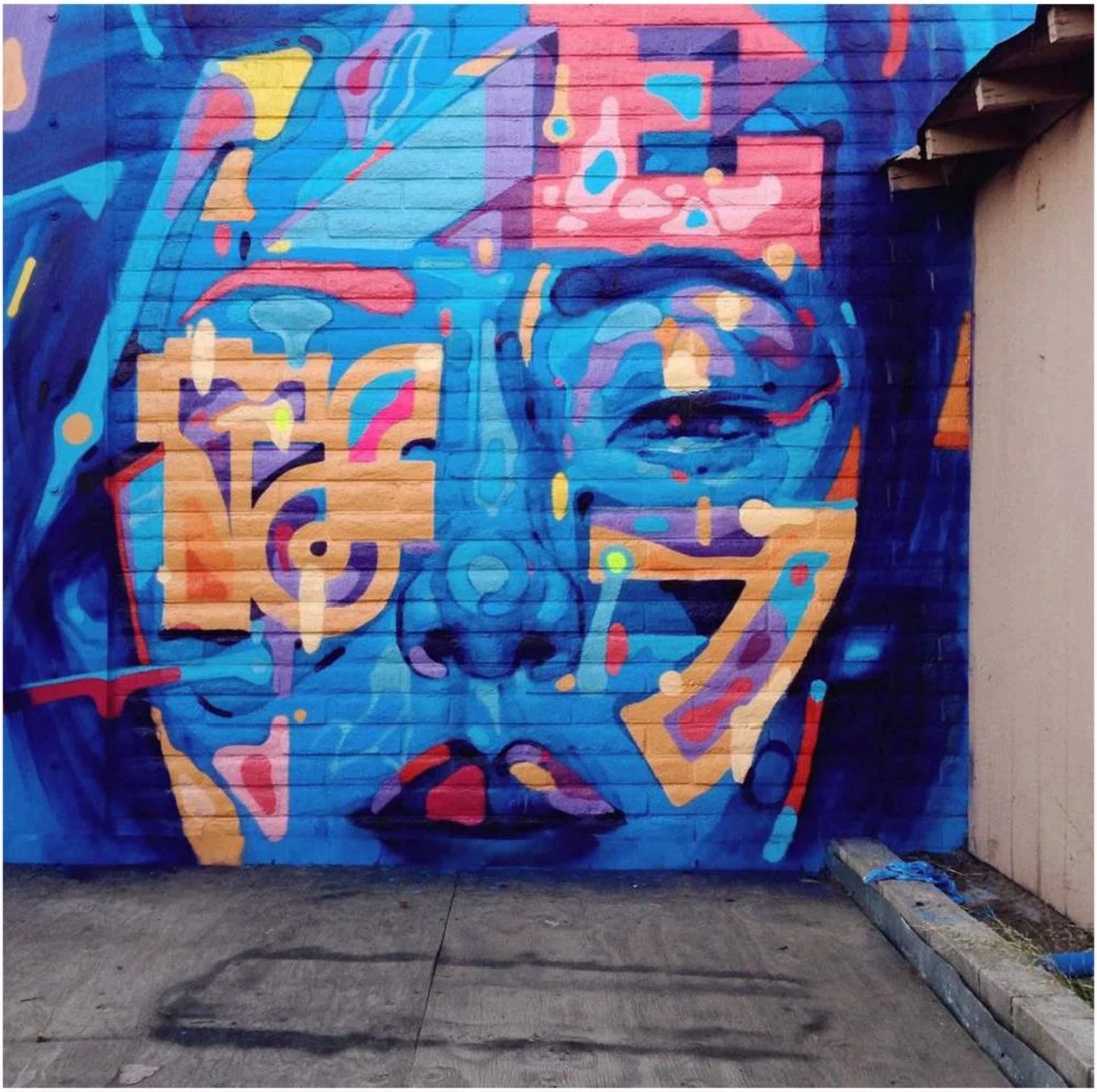
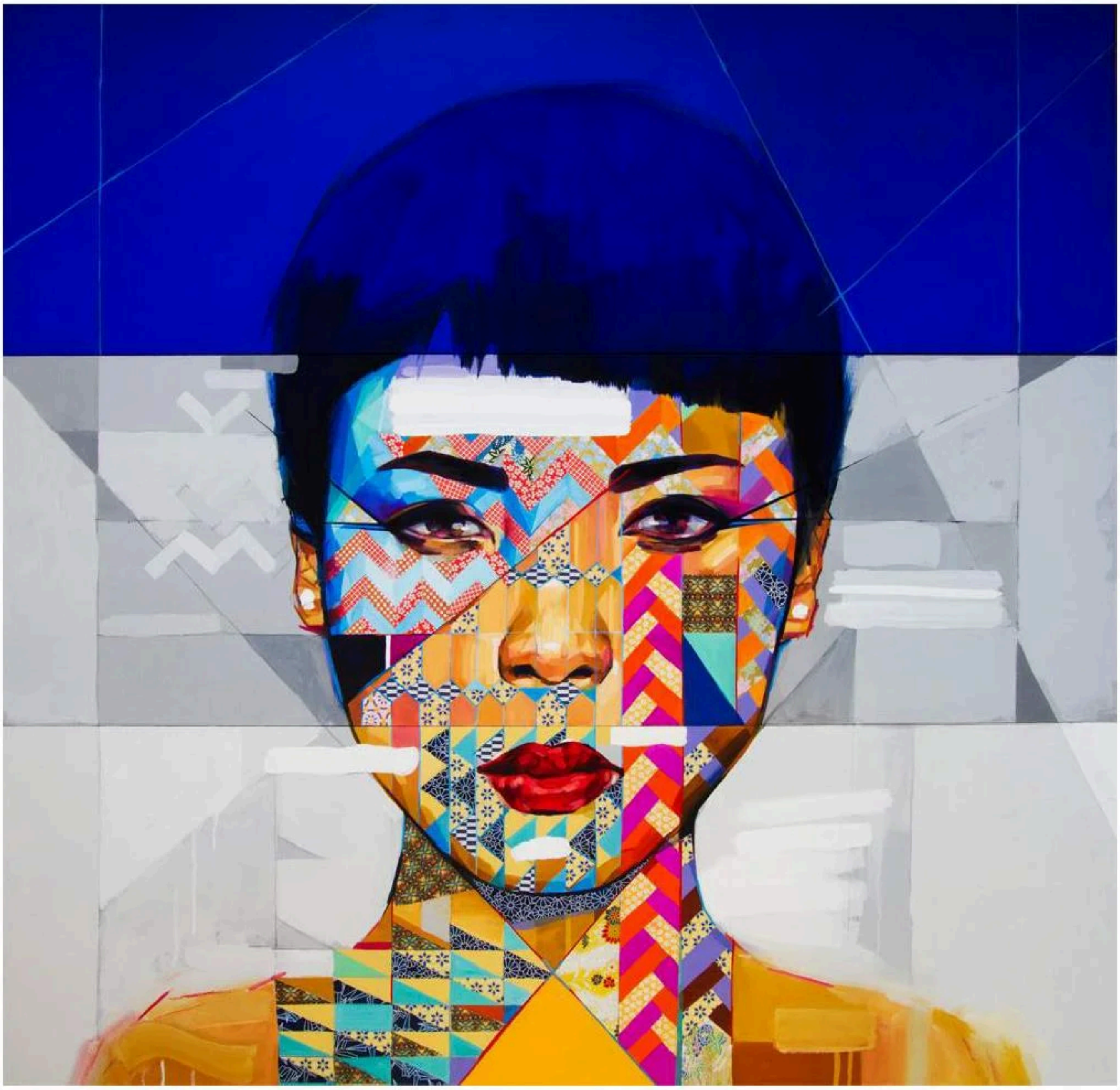
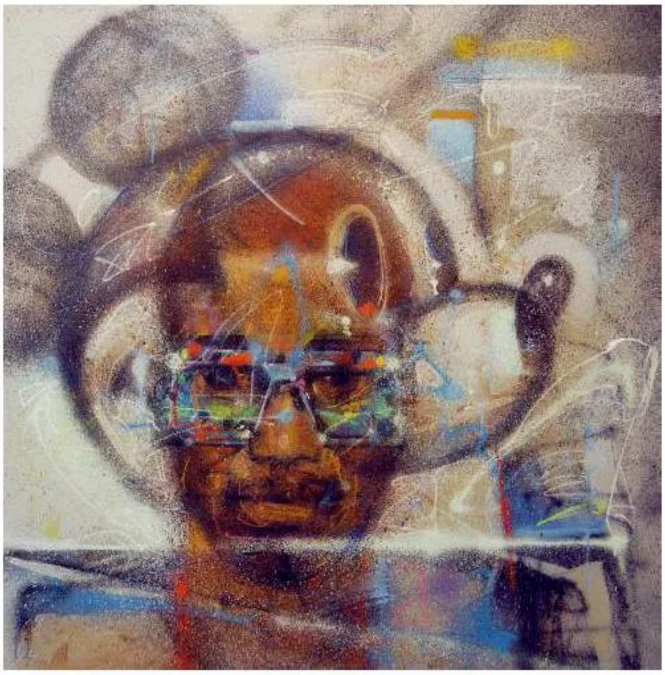
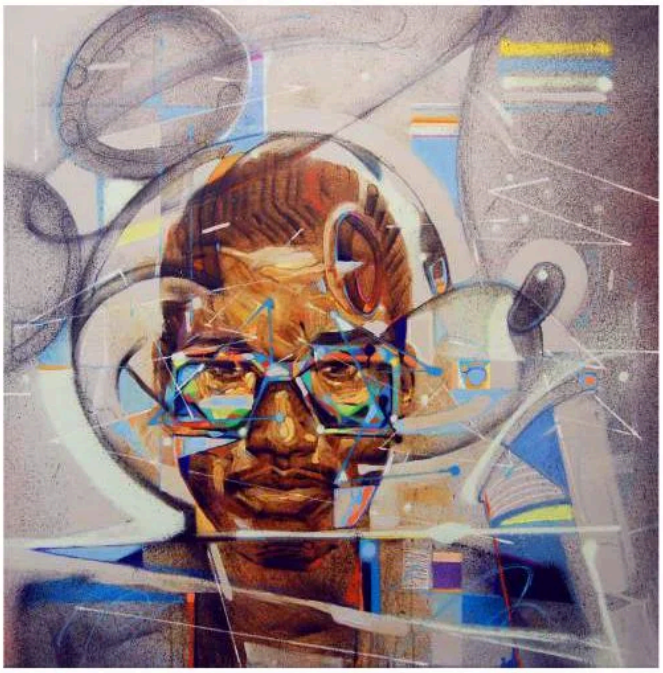


> *I HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE I MIGHT HAVE AN IMPACT ON OUR GENERATION'S ART SCENE.*







realize that you can never really know enough about anything! So, I really have always felt that I should always keep an open mind, challenge myself, and try to reach my highest potential. From school, I didn't learn so much about technique, except for classical approaches which I had lacked on, but what I really gained were very essential critical thinking skills and a larger perspective of art and it's relation to the rest of the world. It is important to study where we've been in a historic view so that we don't repeat concepts and styles that have already evolved.

BBB: Do you feel as if this was in integral part of your development as an artist?

SR: This was very integral in my development. Any time you challenge your mind and body is integral to growth.

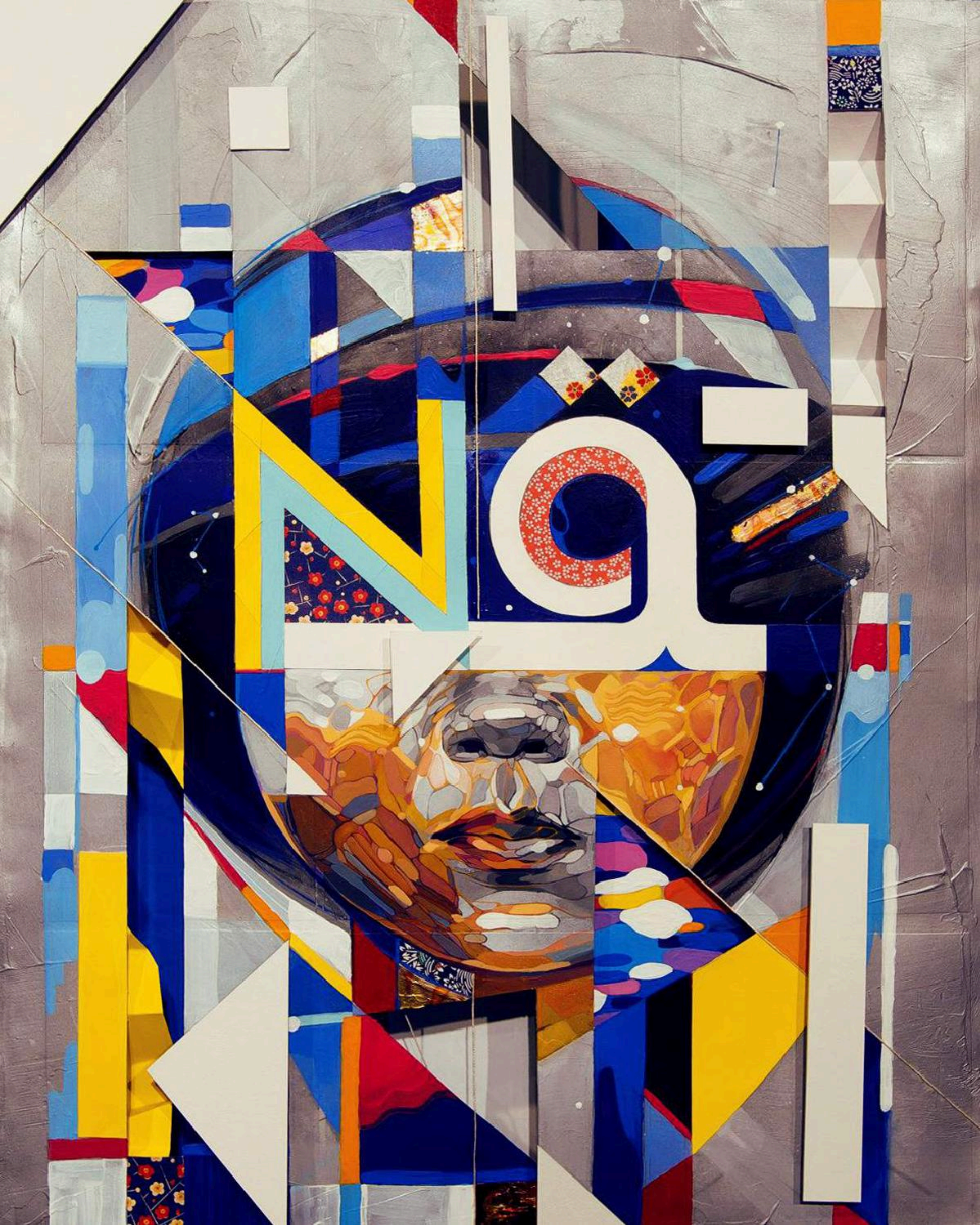
BBB: What advice would you give to younger artists? Would you advise them to enter an educational facility?

SR: I don't know, I would advise them to learn as much as they can, from where is up to them. I still don't know enough and feel like I am barely starting develop my voice. For me school was also important because no one in my family had ever went to college or graduated high school.

BBB: As a Bay Area based artist, what makes your hometown more special to you than other art metropolises?

SR: The Bay Area is very innovative. You have the tri-cities here which are San Francisco to the north, Oakland to the East and San José here in the south where I live. In between these are several micro cities. I think the Bay Area is so innovative because there isn't as much segregation between ethnic groups classes. People embrace differences and that affects our music, art, and social structure. Don't get me wrong, there are still bigots, gated communities and ignorant people everywhere you go, but not as extreme as other places. We are sort of on our own island, our style is flamboyant. We love traditions, and our roots, but it is very important that we do our own twist on them and I'm talking music, food, fashion, and everything!

BBB: As an artist who's exhibited in major museums and galleries, what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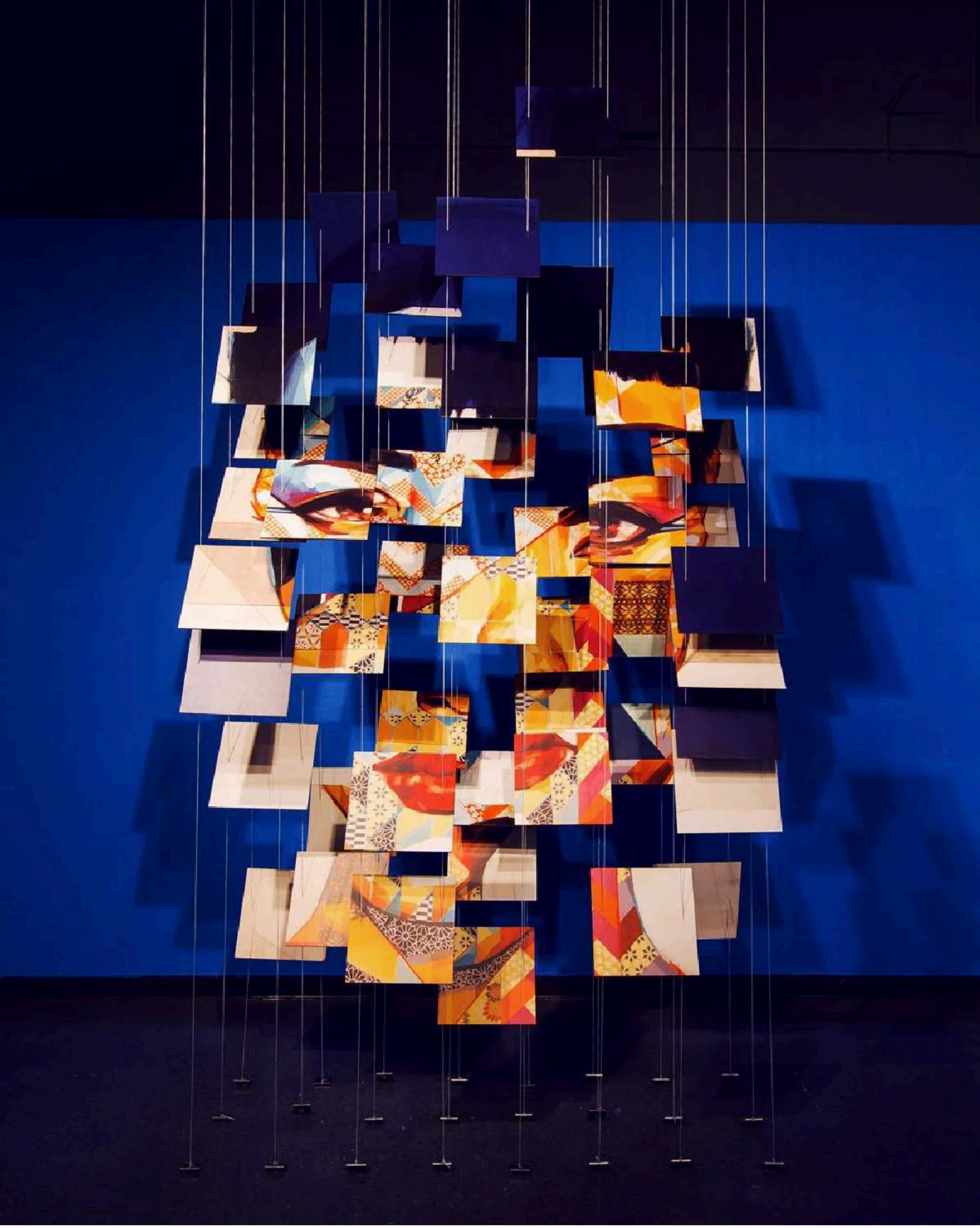

was the experience like having work shown there?

SR: I approach these spaces the same as I would on a wall at the corner liquor store. Space is space, and creativity has no limits. The main thing dealing with majors is knowing how to negotiate, do business, administrate, and stand up for your ideas. School helps with that.

BBB: You've collaborated with many other great artists, how does the team aspect affect your creative process?

SR: I love it! If the person is passionate about the project and is trying to make an effort to have your voice shine as much as theirs and there is harmony, the results can be amazing. Collaboration in general is the future of human evolution. I would like to start collaborating with different fields, especially science, technology and physics.

BBB: How does family play a role in your practice as an artist?

SR: My daughter, and my wife are big time supporters and provide that push. It's important to stay creative and fresh but what I learned from the streets is hustle. Having a family and also a dream of being an artist has definitely given incentive to hustle hard.

Confidence and speaking up for your vision will keep you from being pushed to do something you don't want to, in other words like rapper E40 says "money don't make me, I make money". My wife is my art director, she knows my artistic goals better than anyone, so I trust her criticism and objective point of view.

BBB: Are there any final events, projects or tidbits about yourself our readers may not know about you would like to express?

SR: I hope that in the future I might have an impact on our generation's art scene.

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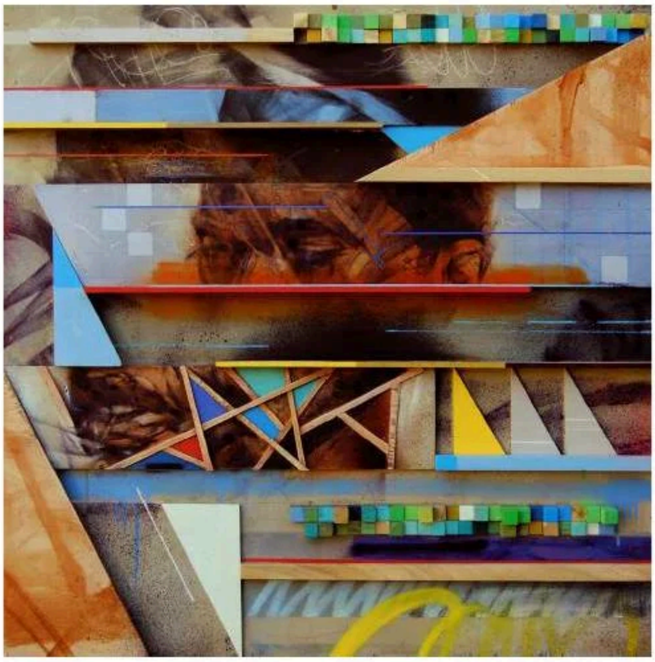

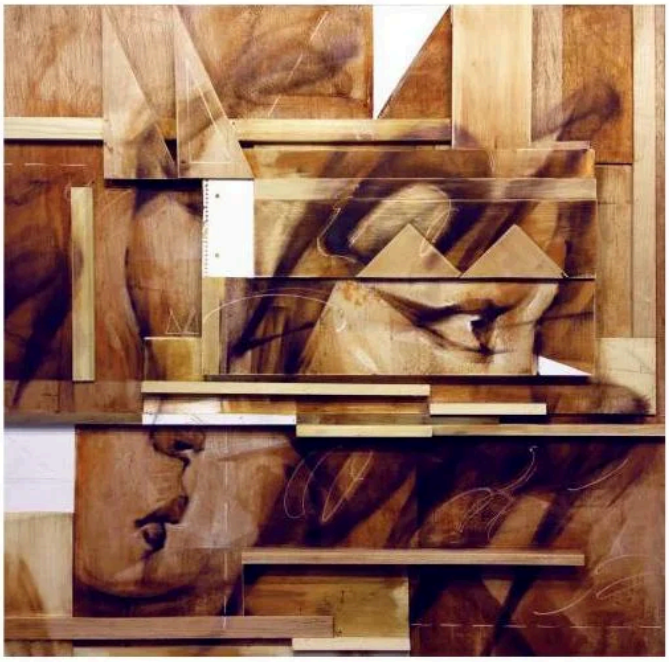

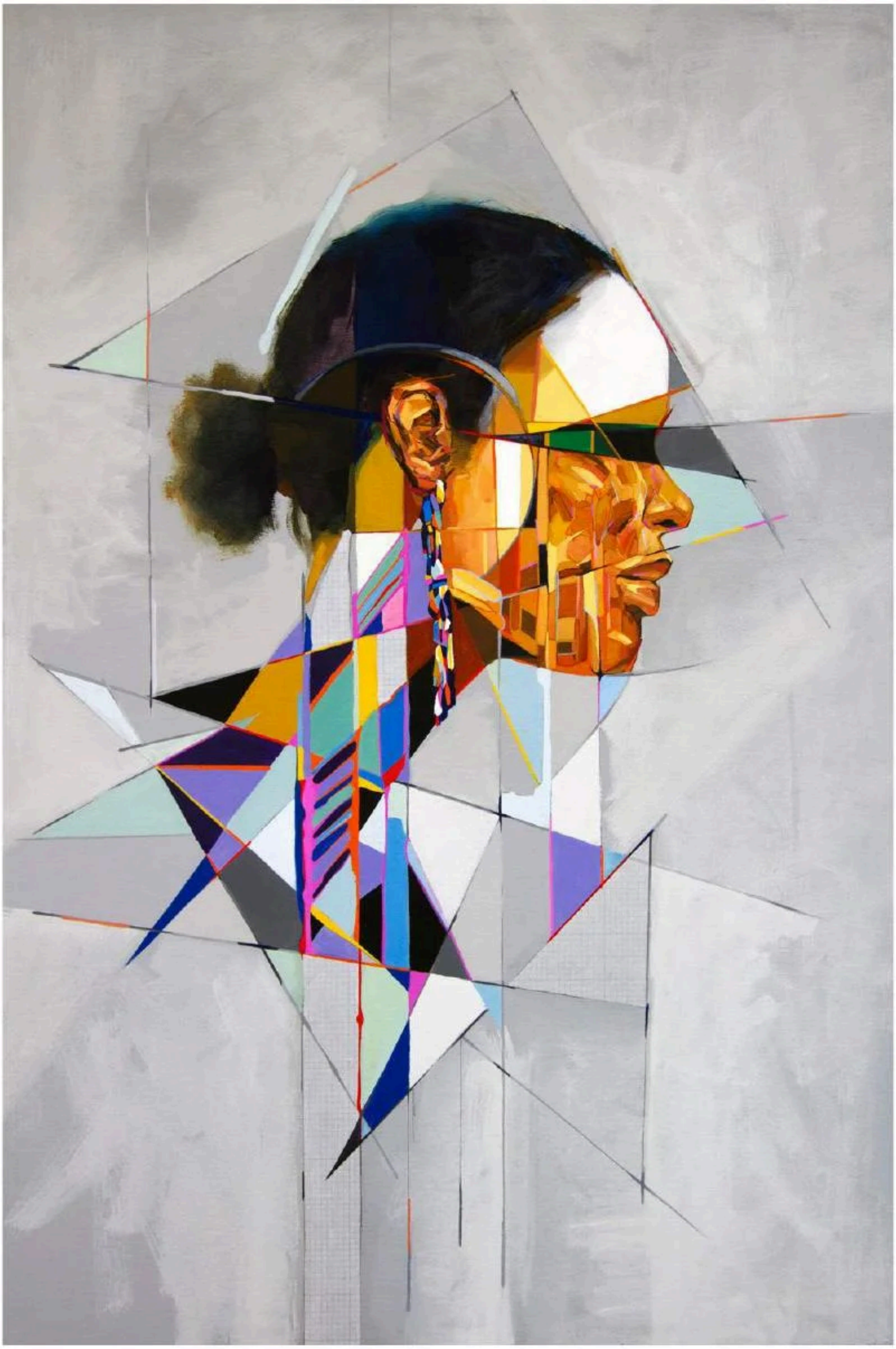

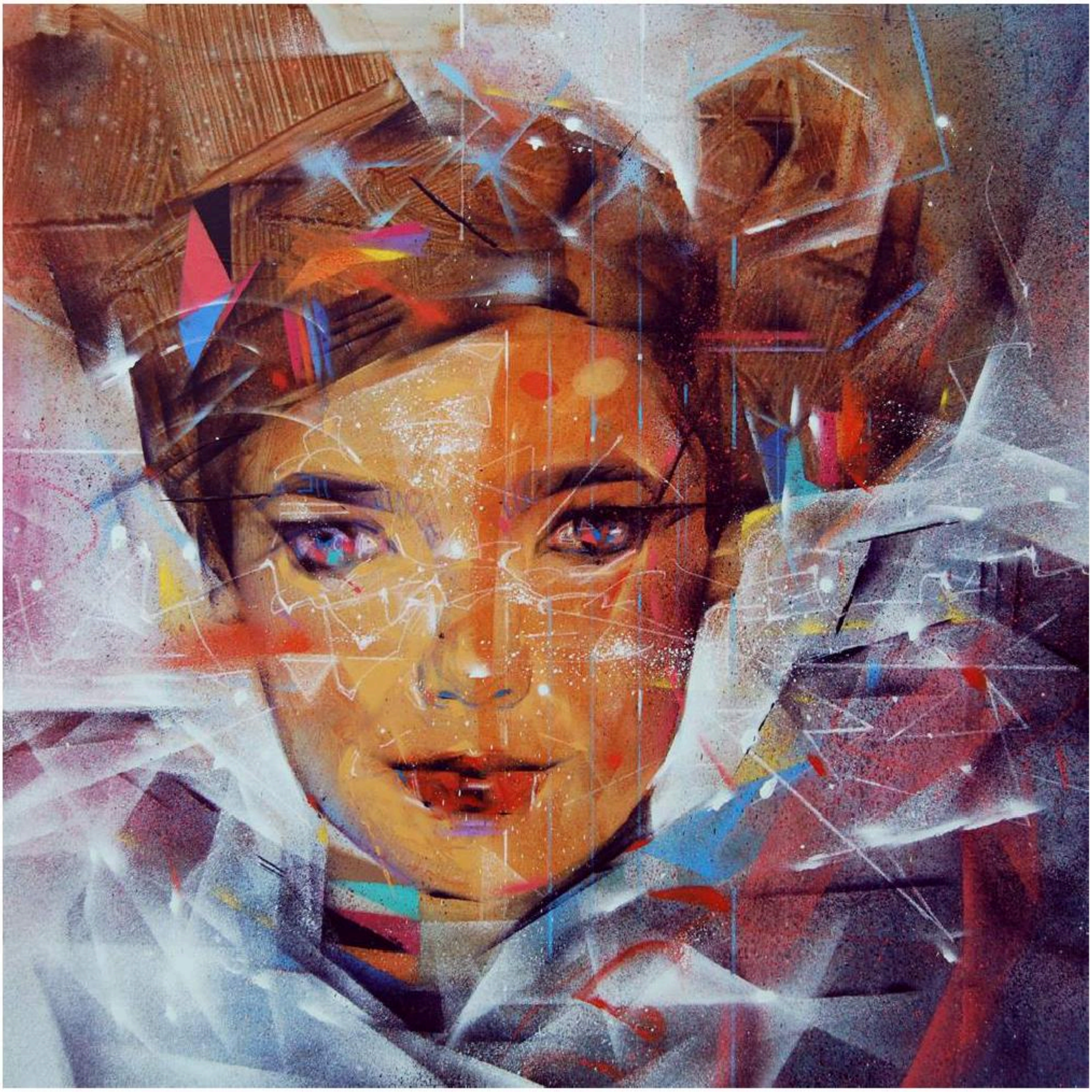

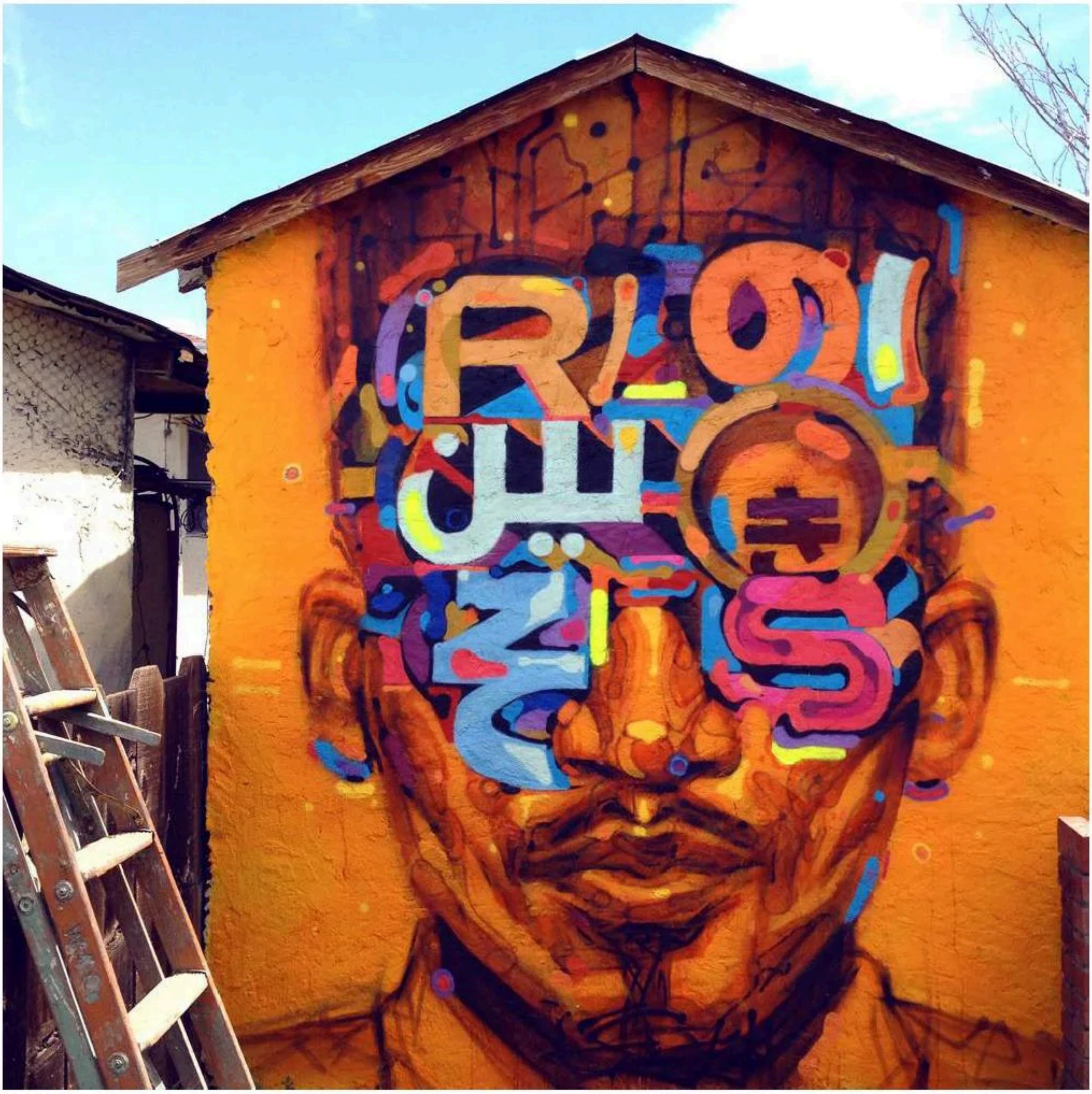

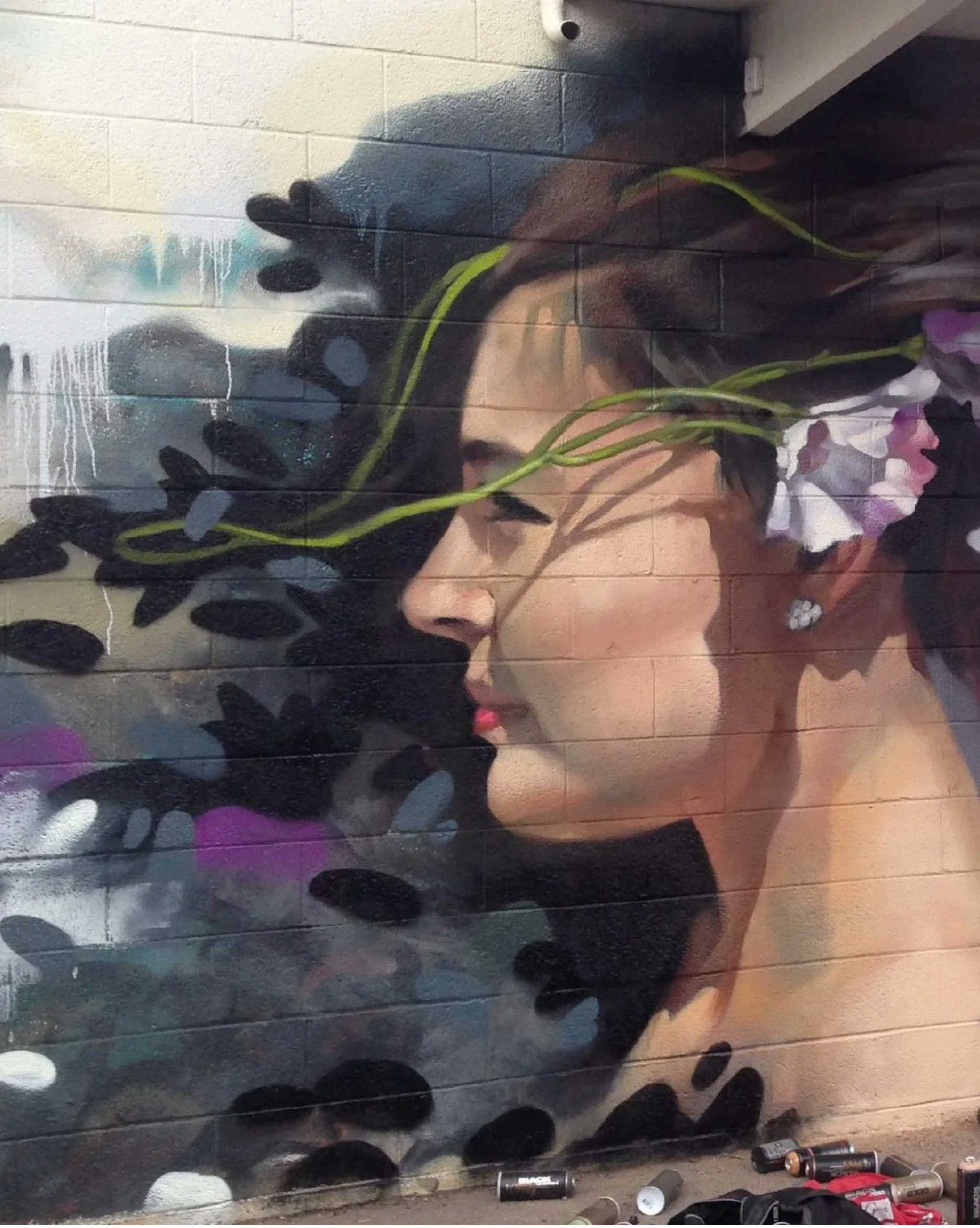
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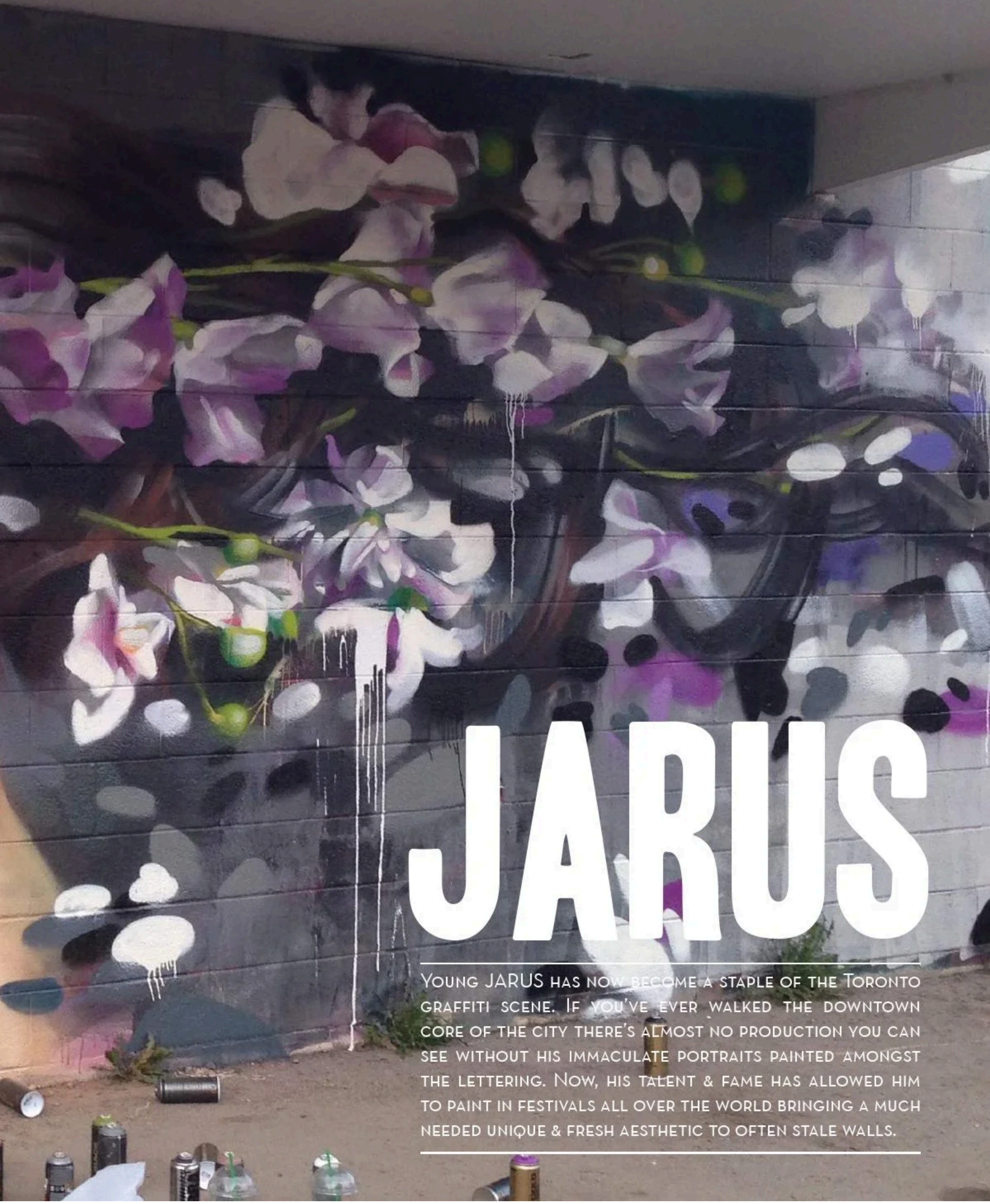
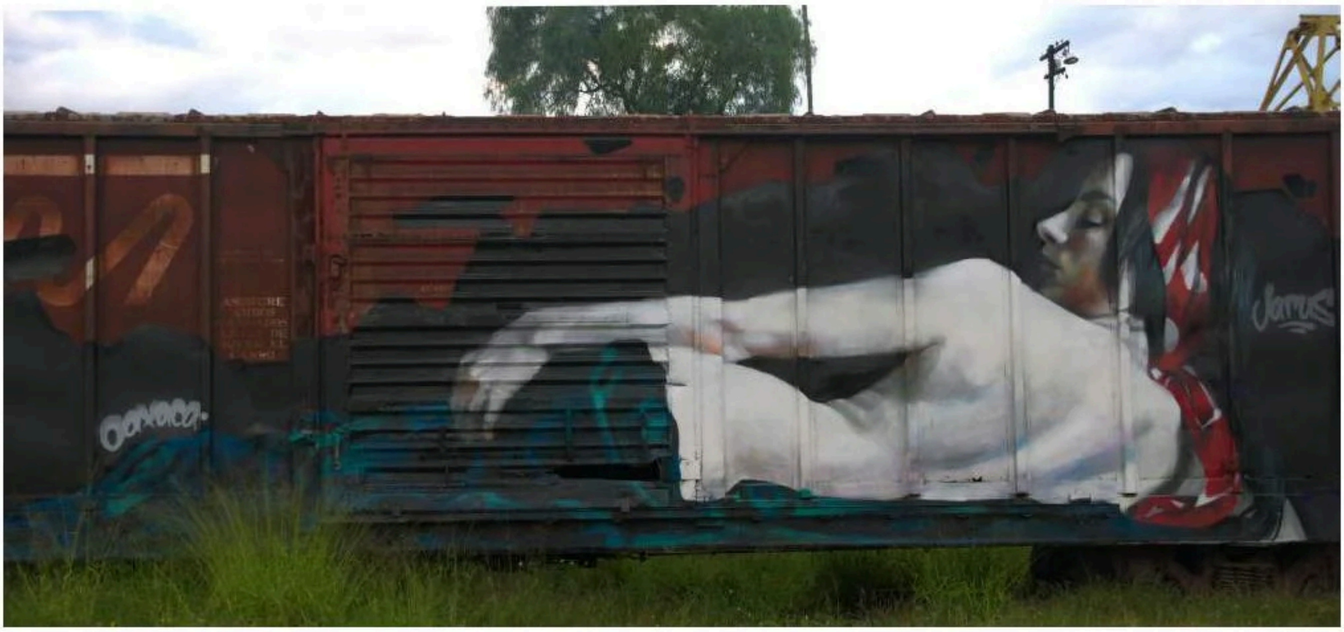
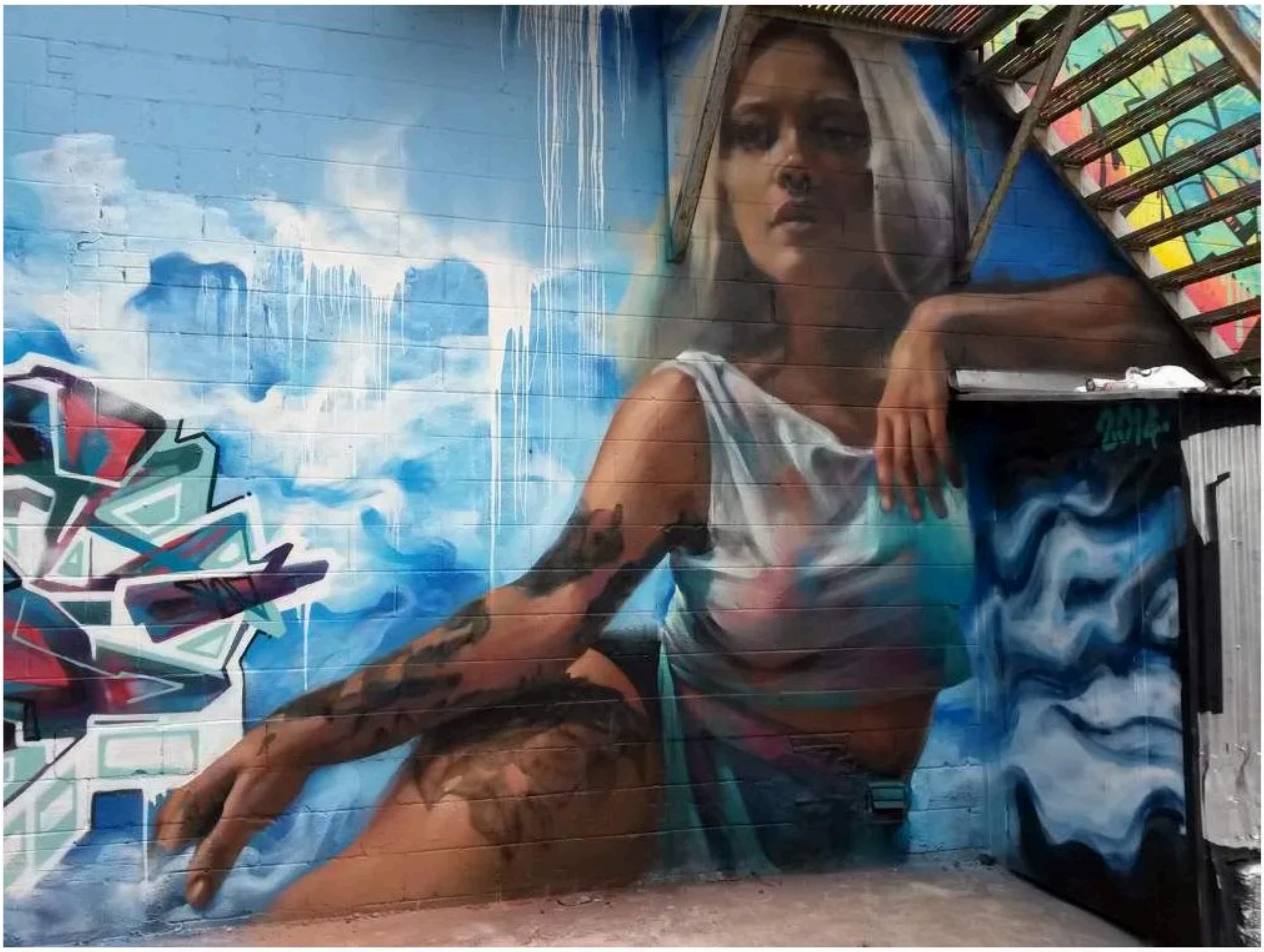


JARUS

Young JARUS has now become a staple of the Toronto graffiti scene. If you've ever walked the downtown core of the city there's almost no production you can see without his immaculate portraits painted amongst the lettering. Now, his talent & fame has allowed him to paint in festivals all over the world bringing a much needed unique & fresh aesthetic to often stale walls.

LORAAS
DISPOSAL





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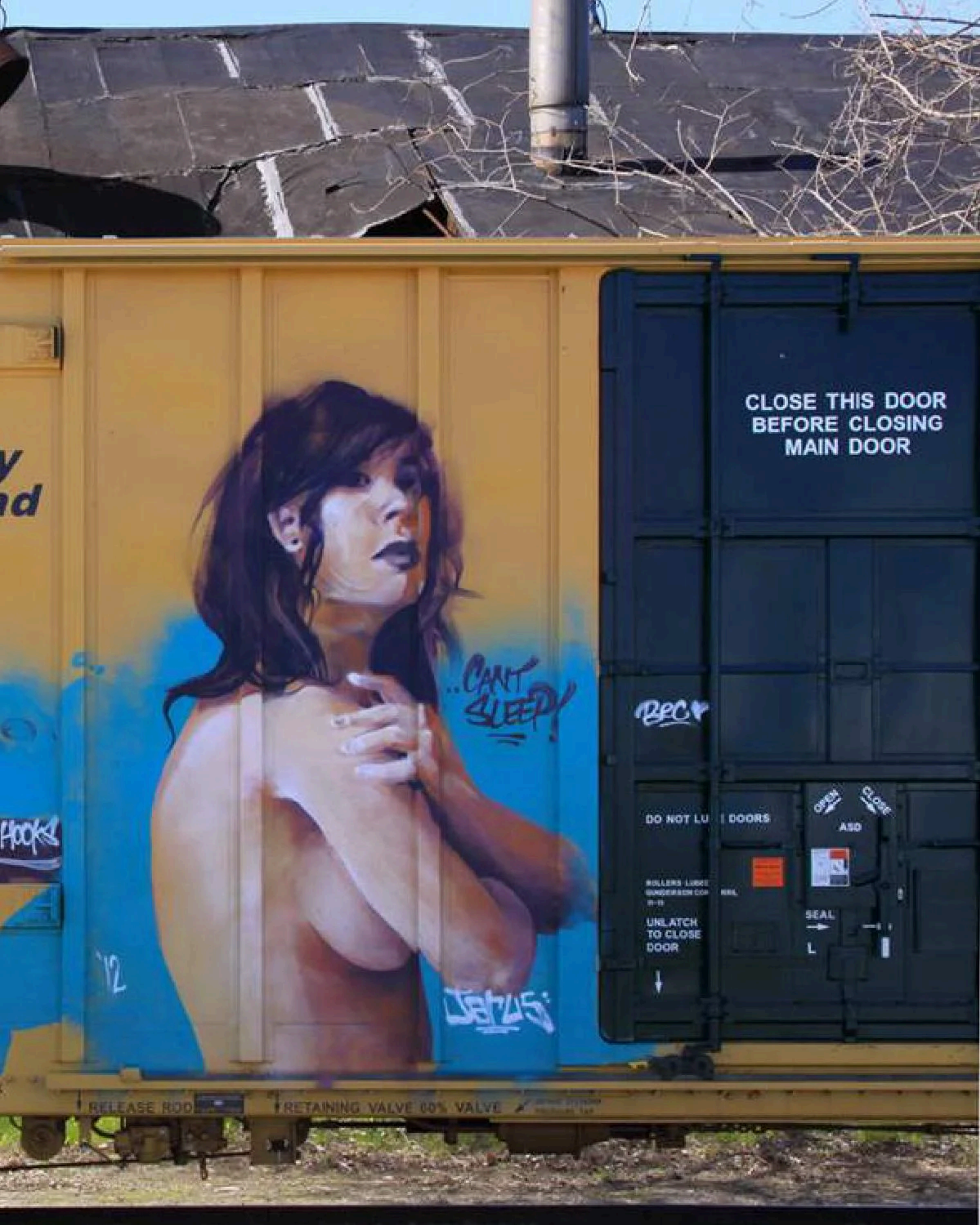
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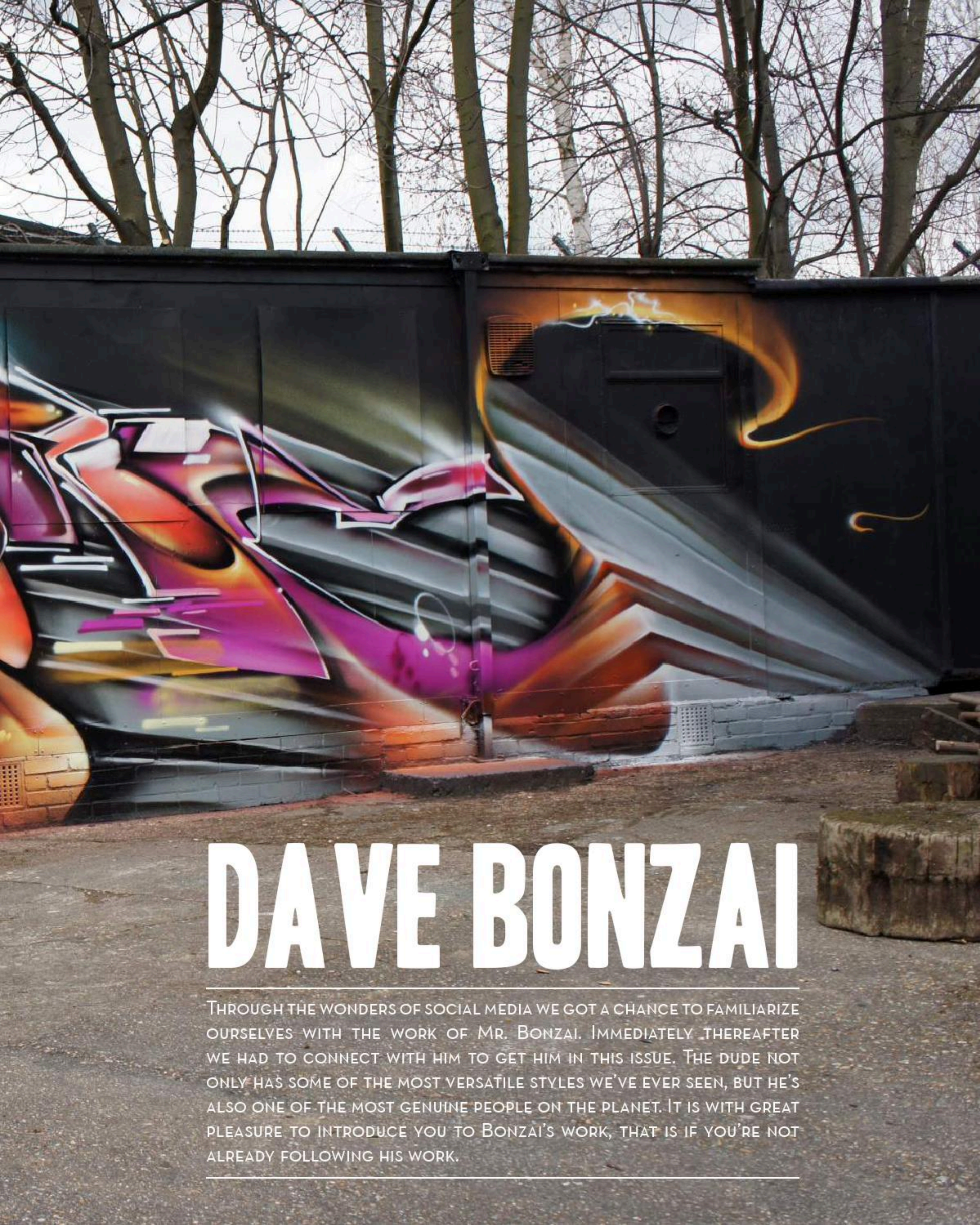
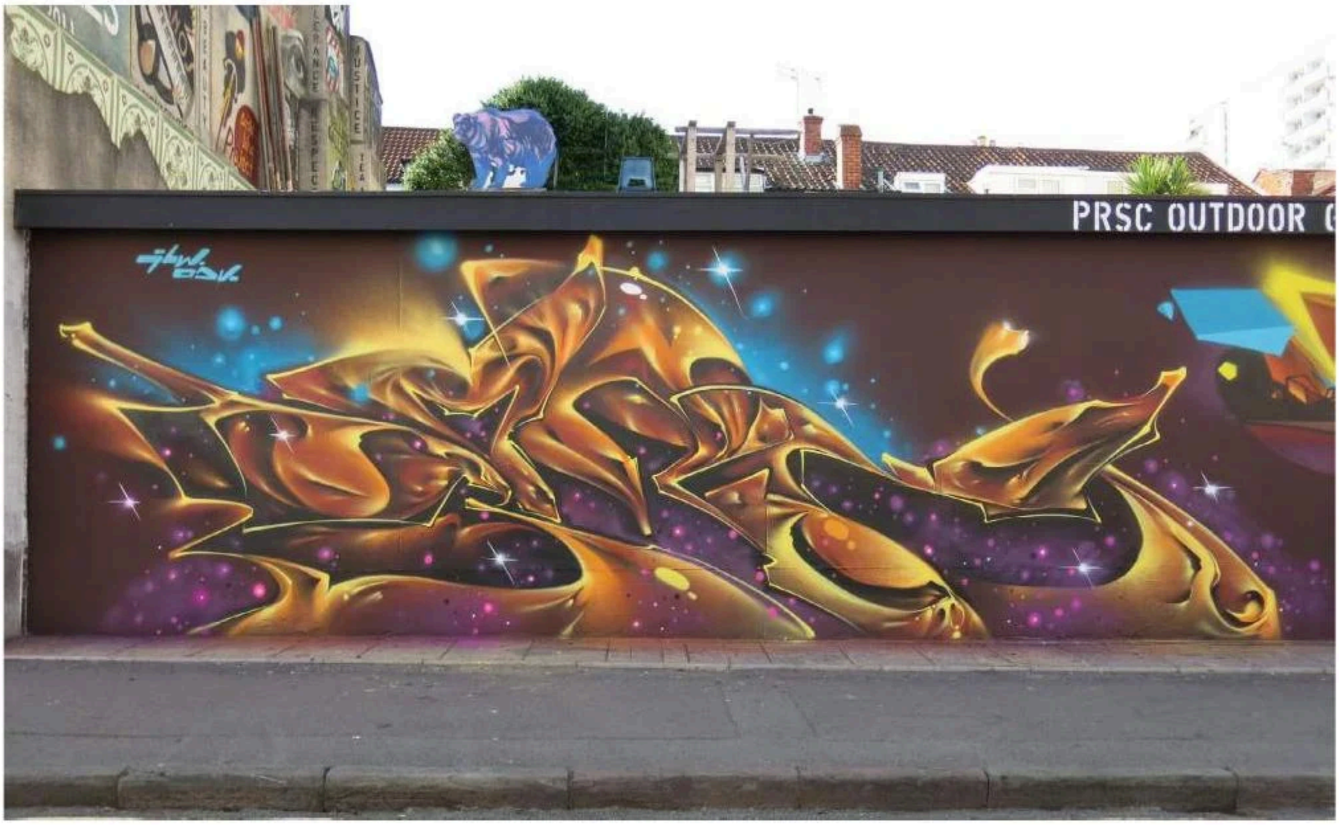


DAVE BONZAI

Through the wonders of social media we got a chance to familiarize ourselves with the work of Mr. Bonzai. Immediately thereafter we had to connect with him to get him in this issue. The dude not only has some of the most versatile styles we've ever seen, but he's also one of the most genuine people on the planet. It is with great pleasure to introduce you to Bonzai's work, that is if you're not already following his work.



Bizarre Beyond Belief: What fascinated you the most about graffiti and the culture the most to begin painting?

Dave Bonzai: I was about 12 when I first started seeing graffiti around. Hip-hop had reached the UK and most kids my age and older were into it. Because of that, and also Subway Art, Spray can Art and the Style Wars movie, I became totally fascinated by it.

BBB: Can you tell us about the first time you picked up some equipment and went out painting?

DB: I loved drawing from a really young age, and when I started seeing graffiti I turned my interest towards drawing letters. I was drawing letters on scraps of paper and all my school books. A few older kids were going into the city centre and breakdancing on the weekends. I had been invited along one time to do graffiti on there cardboard. I didn't have any proper makers so one of them took me to the art store and schooled me on racking. A short time after, a good friend of mine who was also doing graffiti and had racked a load of silver and black and asked me if I wanted to paint a train bridge. We went there and just painted it in the day. We didn't have a clue what we were doing and god only knows how we didn't get caught.

BBB: Considering graffiti has a number of aspects to its practice (tagging, bombing, piecing etc.), Which do you prefer the most and why?

DB: I love seeing graffiti! I love seeing tracksides, tags, runners everything. I'm a full time artist and this isn't just my passion it's also my job. So for me right now I like to pour all my energy into creating the best I can on a wall, which means sometimes it can take me 2/3 days to finish a wall. Maybe even more if it's a big project. People often say "I like what your doing but I don't like the tags." - I have to tell them that without that wouldn't be what myself and many others are doing on walls. It's all part of the same thing. And of course, when the occasion arises, I still like the buzz.

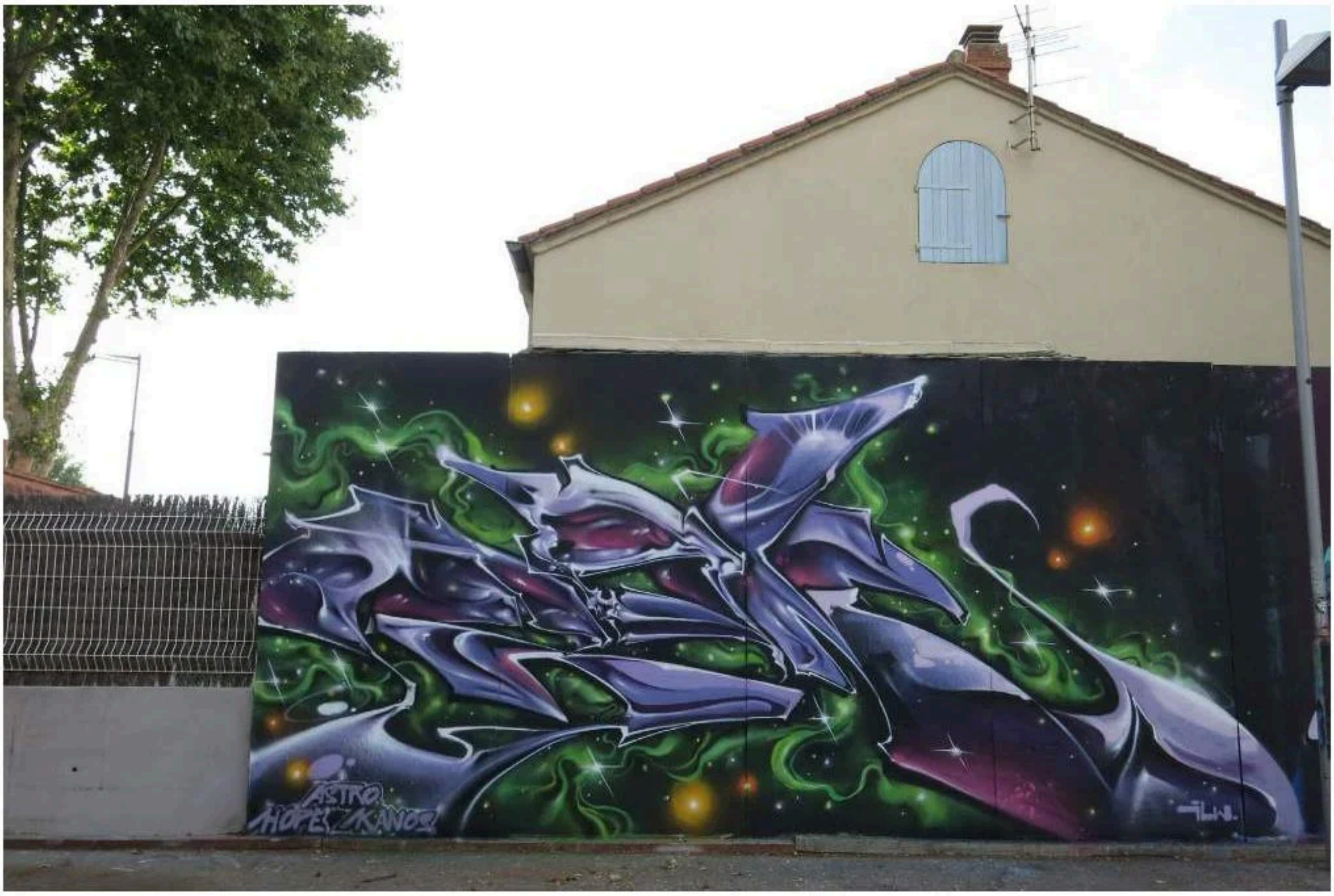
BBB: Your style ranges from clean straight letters to intricate burners, how does your creative approach differentiate between fields?

DB: Haha, my more "simpler" style has always been there I just chose not to do it for a long time as I wanted to concentrate on the technical pieces. I worked really hard to try and figure out all the techniques and flow. After a few years of really strange pieces with loads of colour and totally abstract letters, it's all starting to come together now. As for my approach towards them, I don't do sketches for the more complex ones, I choose my colours and freestyle them. As I've said before, they can take up to a few days to complete because they're always big. The best advice I was given was take your time and they take as long as they take. As for the "simpler" pieces, these are great if I'm busy with other projects and don't have much time because I can paint these very quickly. I find these equally as much fun as my more complex prices, though.

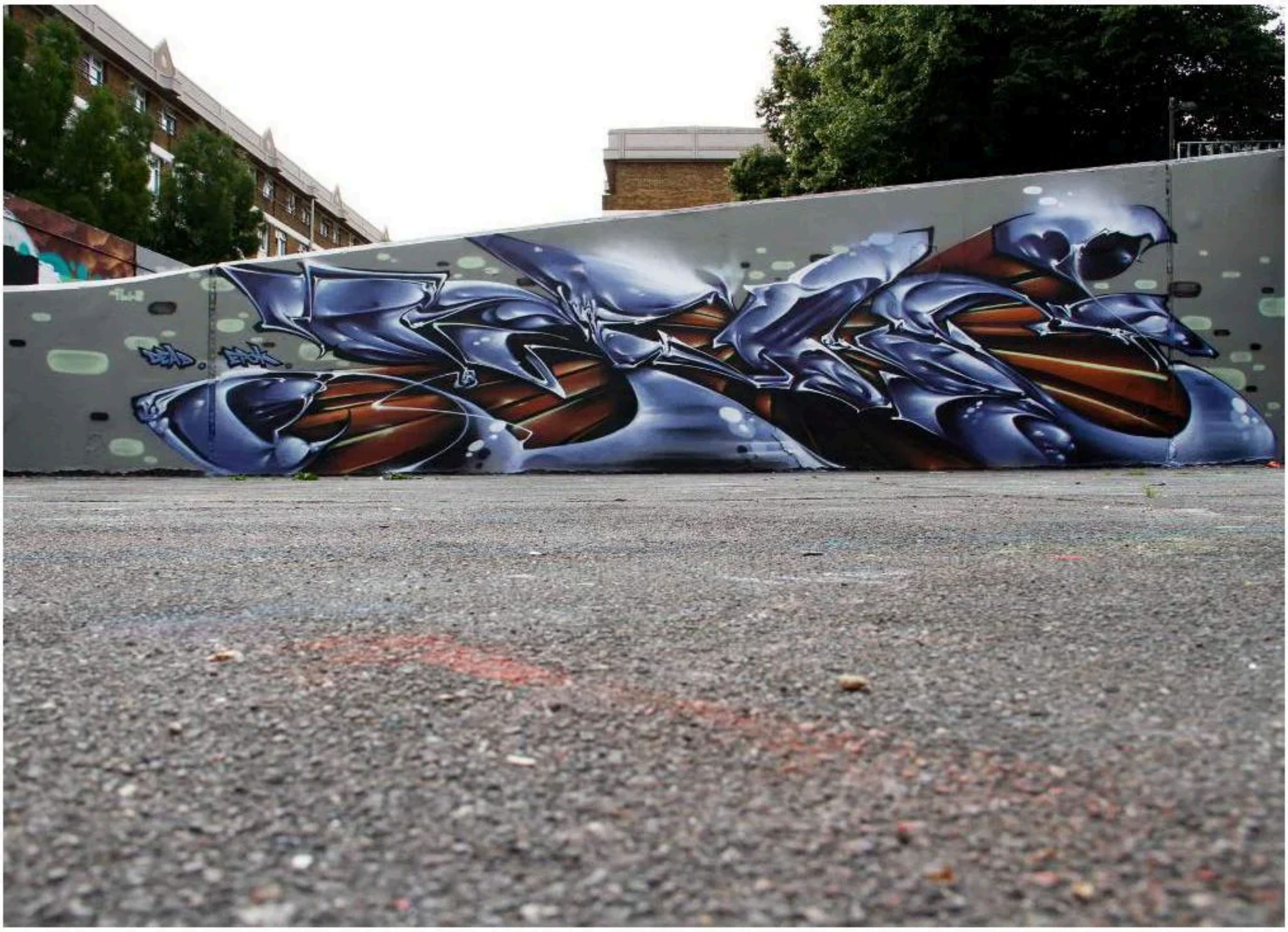
BBB: As an artist who's traveled to a number of cities, which are your favourite to paint in?

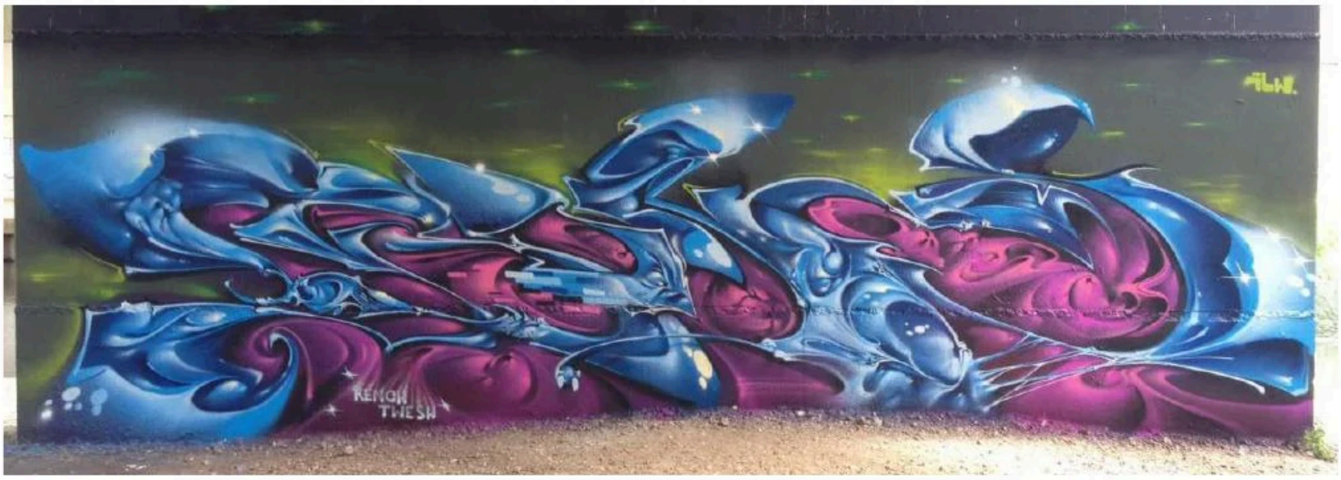
DB: I've been really blessed to have been invited and travel to many countries. Each has been an amazing experience for me and I always leave having met new friends and learned new things. As for my favourite, it's hard to say because each has had different aspects that I've really enjoyed.

BBB: How do these cities compare to your hometown in mentality,



> I LIKE TO POUR ALL MY ENERGY INTO CREATING THE BEST I CAN ON A WALL

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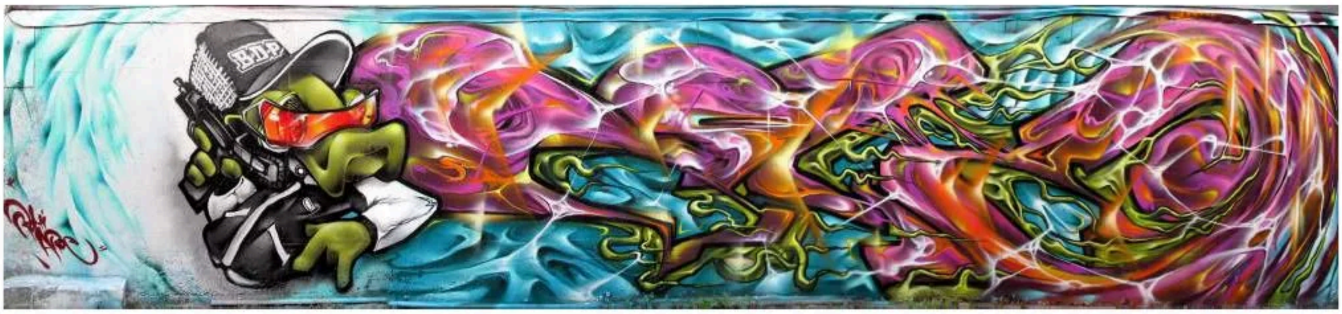
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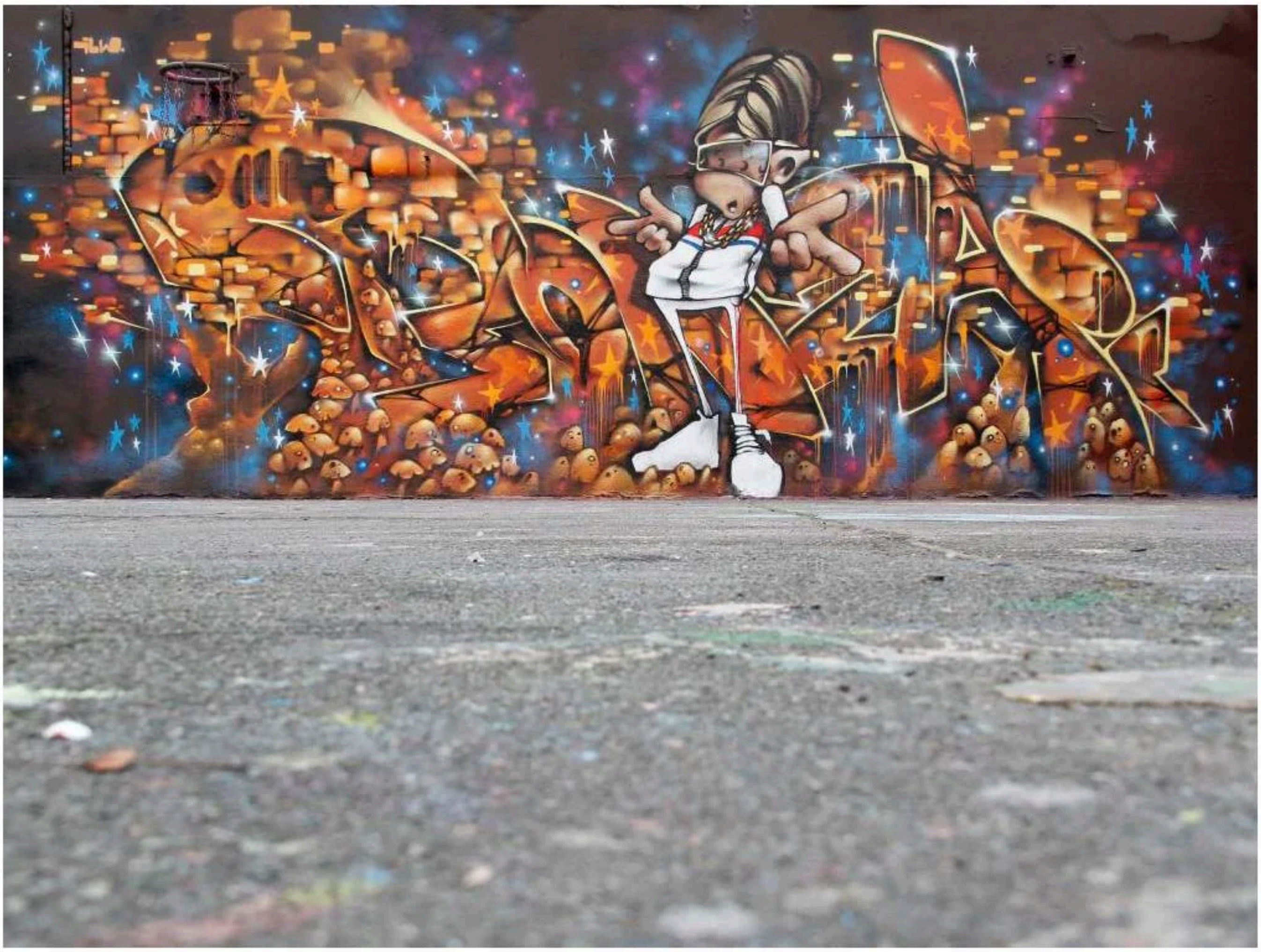

dangerousness and aesthetically?

DB: It depends totally on where I am, every city has its good and bad sides. Fortunately, I usually get to hang out with local writers who show me the good side. This also means I get to experience the things that most tourists don't get to.

BBB: What has graffiti given you in both your artistic life and personal life that nothing else could have?

DB: Patience and great friends.

BBB: Besides graffiti, what are 5 things that you could absolutely not live without?

DB: My lady, my family, friends, traveling, sneakers.

BBB: What would be your top 3 albums on the boombox if you were out at a wall painting a burner?

DB: Public Enemy - "Yo Bum Rush the Show", Lord finesse - "Funky Technician" and anything by MF DOOM

BBB: As an artist who's constantly keeping busy, where do you see yourself in 5, 10 and 20 years?

DB: Painting and traveling.

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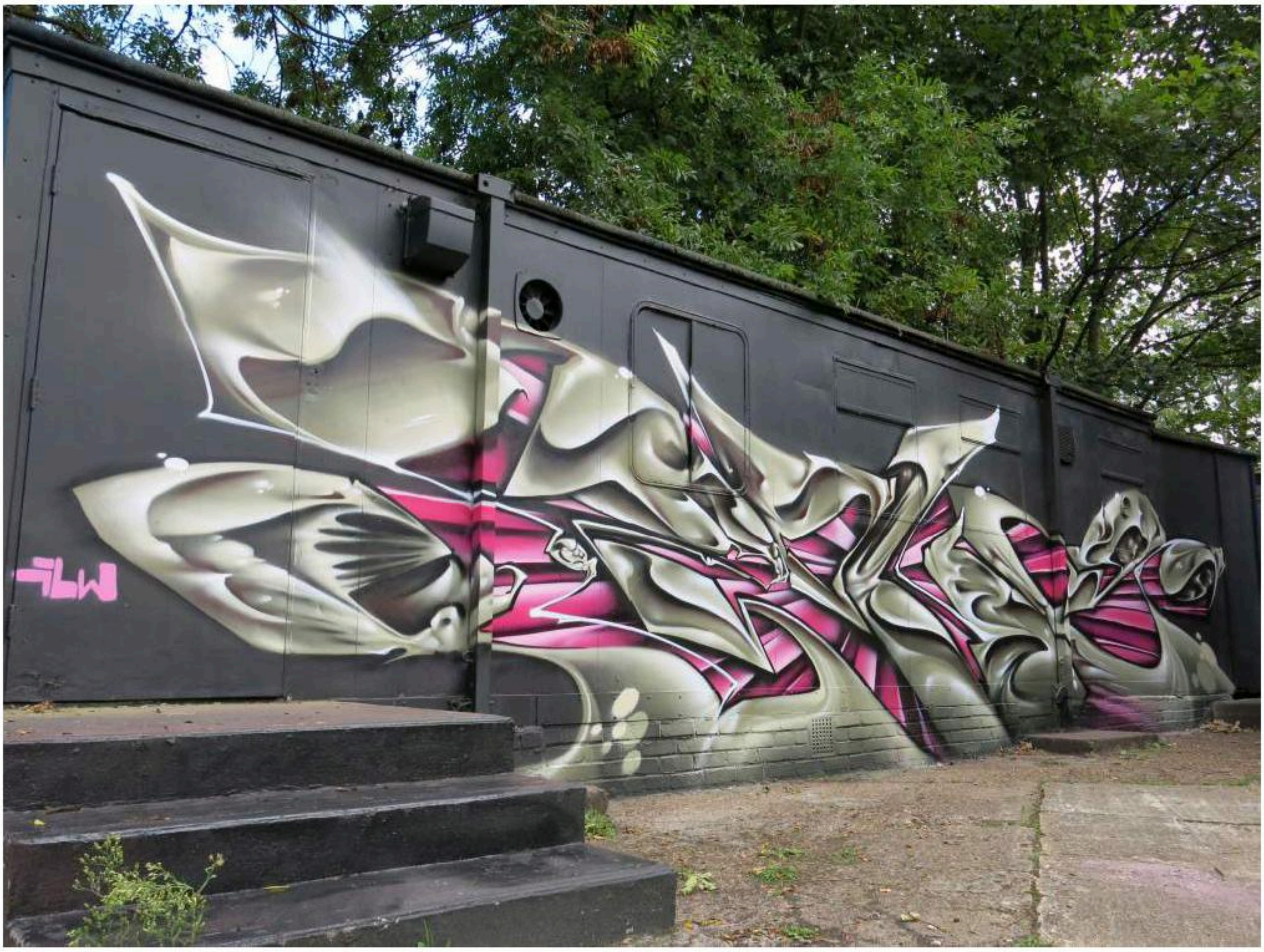
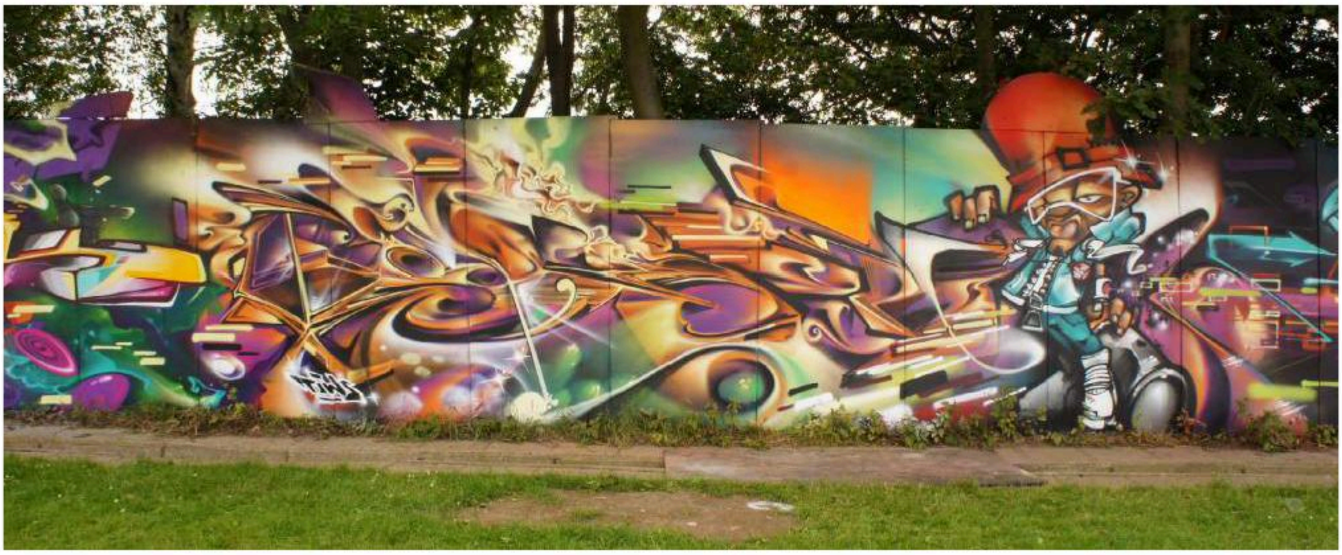
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ THEDAVEBONZAI

Instagram: @davebonzai





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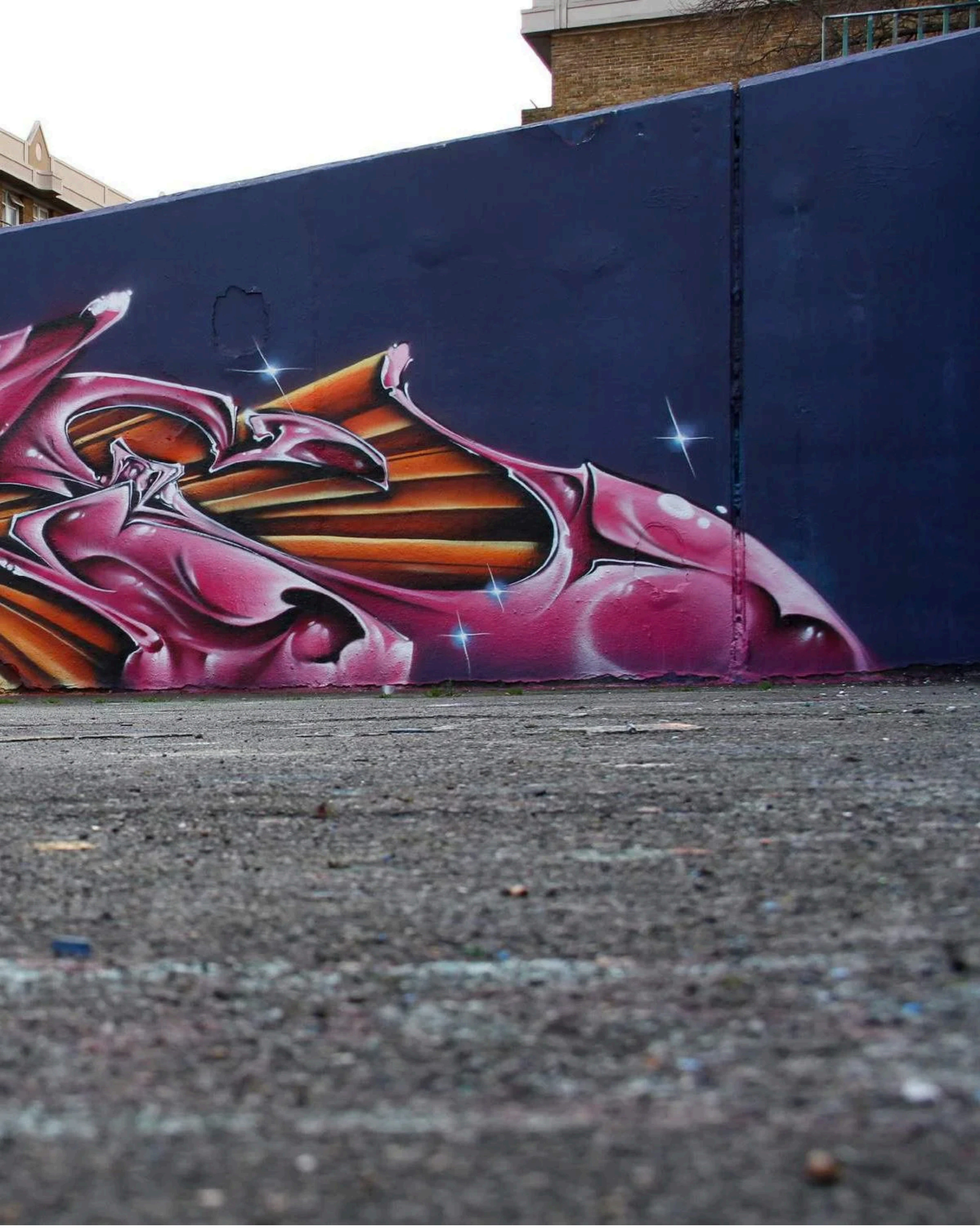
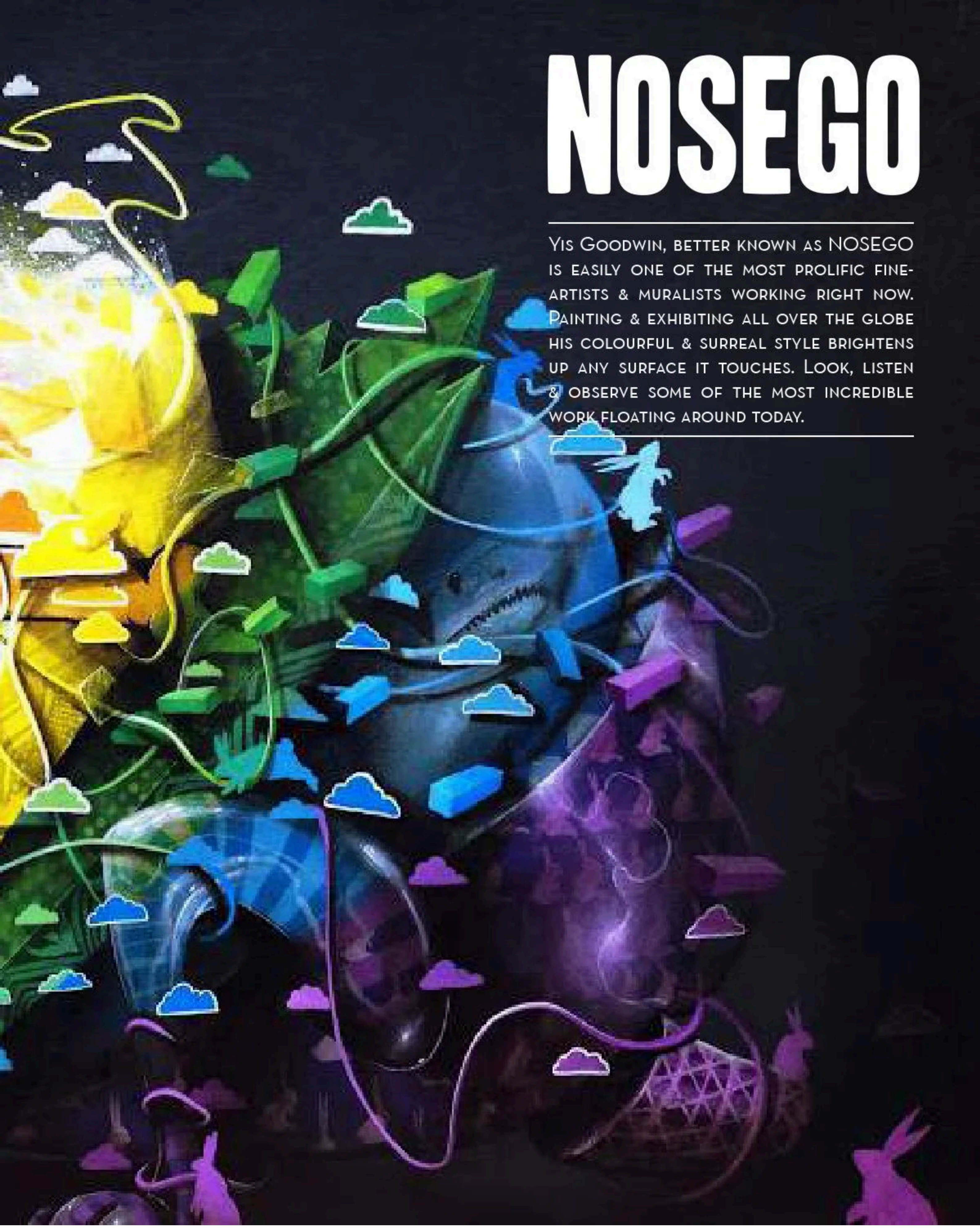
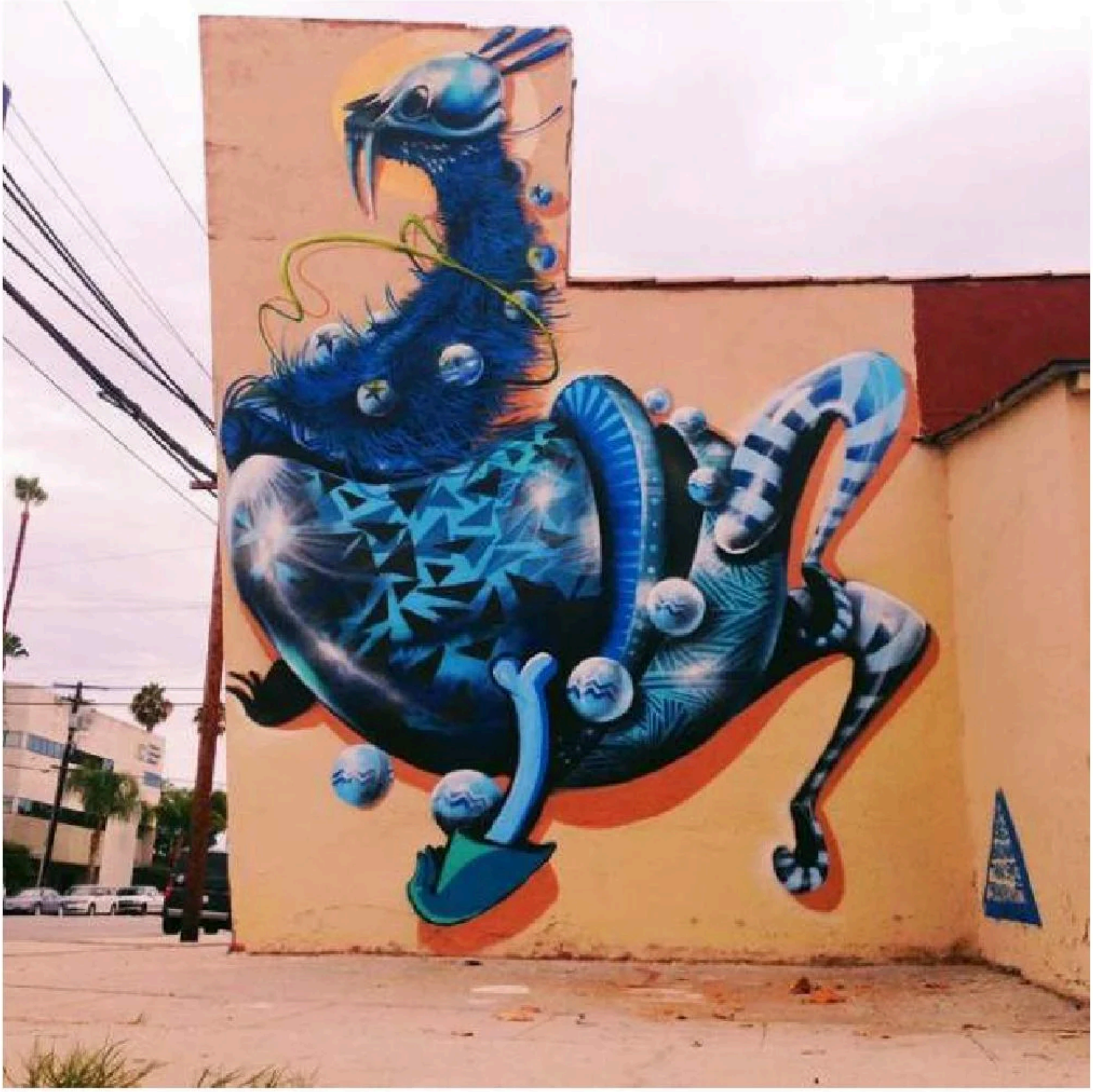


NOSEGO

Yis Goodwin, better known as NOSEGO is easily one of the most prolific fine-artists & muralists working right now. Painting & exhibiting all over the globe his colourful & surreal style brightens up any surface it touches. Look, listen & observe some of the most incredible work floating around today.





Bizarre Beyond Belief: We all know the term "Nose Goes", how did you come up with the name Nosego and what's its significance to you?

Nosego: I used to use the name Nose and later added the first two letters of my last name, Goodwin.

BBB: How did your childhood play a role in your development as an artist?

Nosego: As a child I spent a lot of time around other family members that were artists. Tools for painting and drawing were easily accessible, making it an early hobby of mine.

BBB: Do you often use references to create work or go from pure imagination?

Nosego: I usually use my imagination, unless I need to do research on a subject.

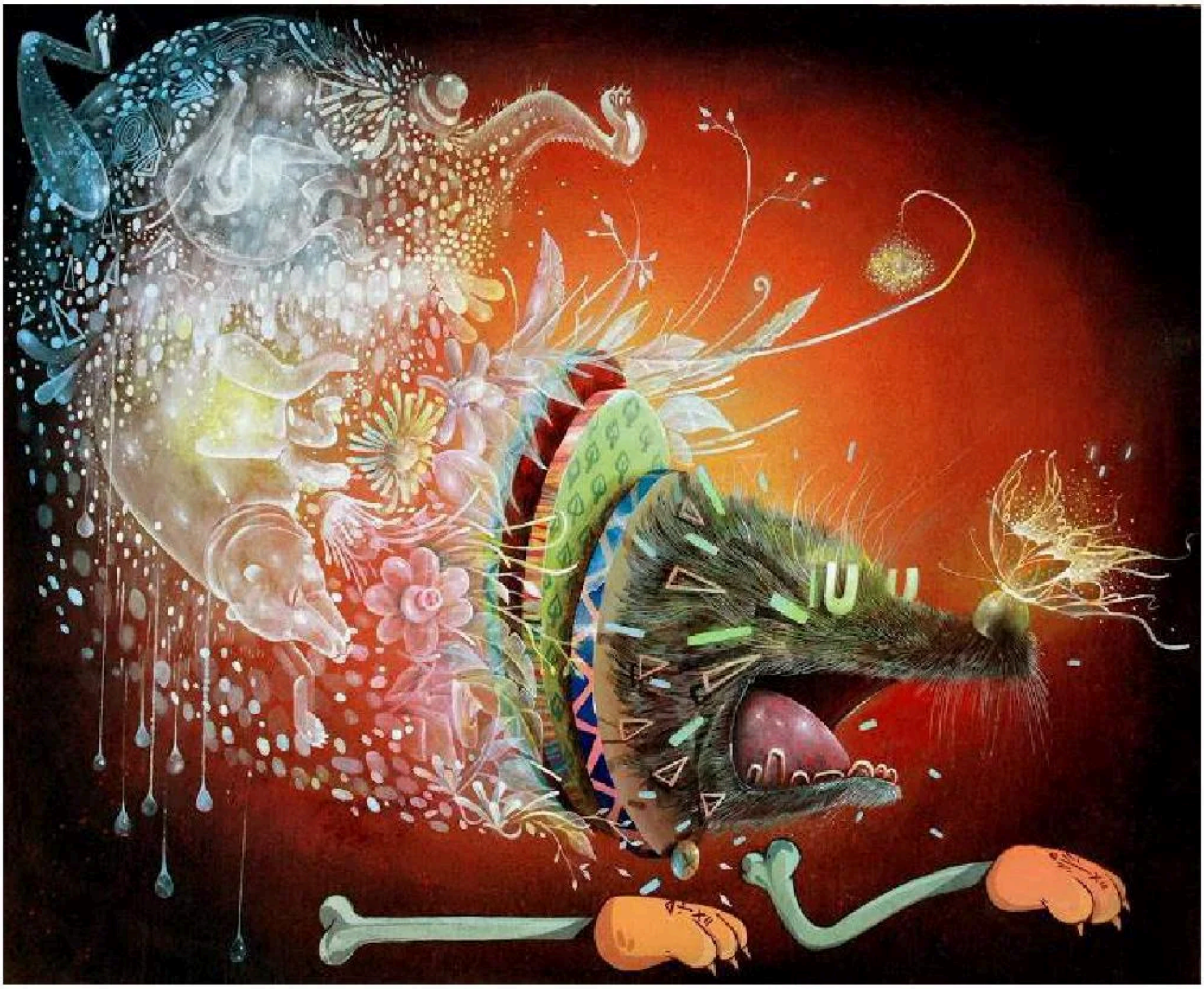
BBB: As an artist whose work varies from massive murals to extremely detailed paintings, how does your creative process change between fields?

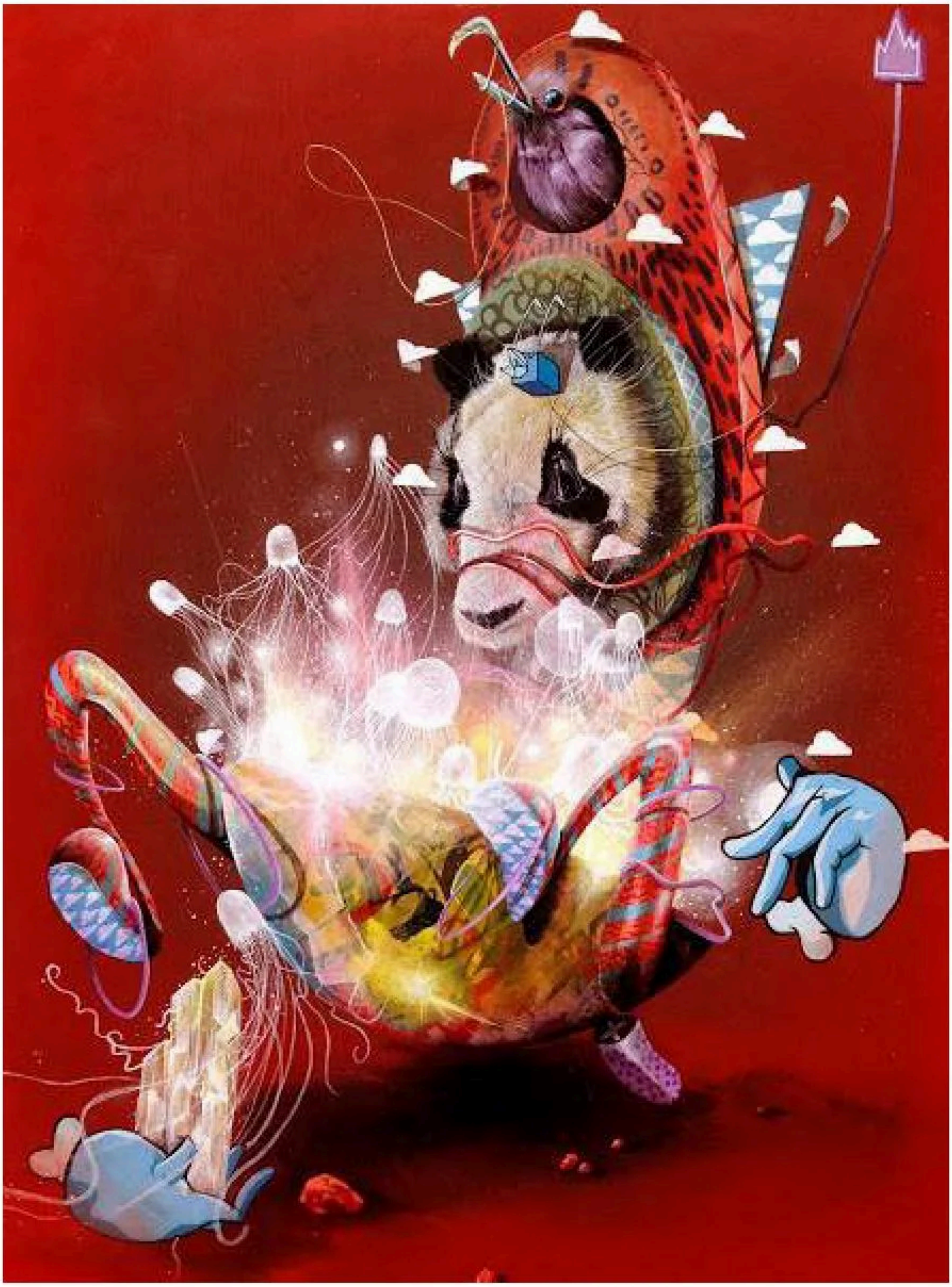
Nosego: The creative process doesn't change, just the approach.

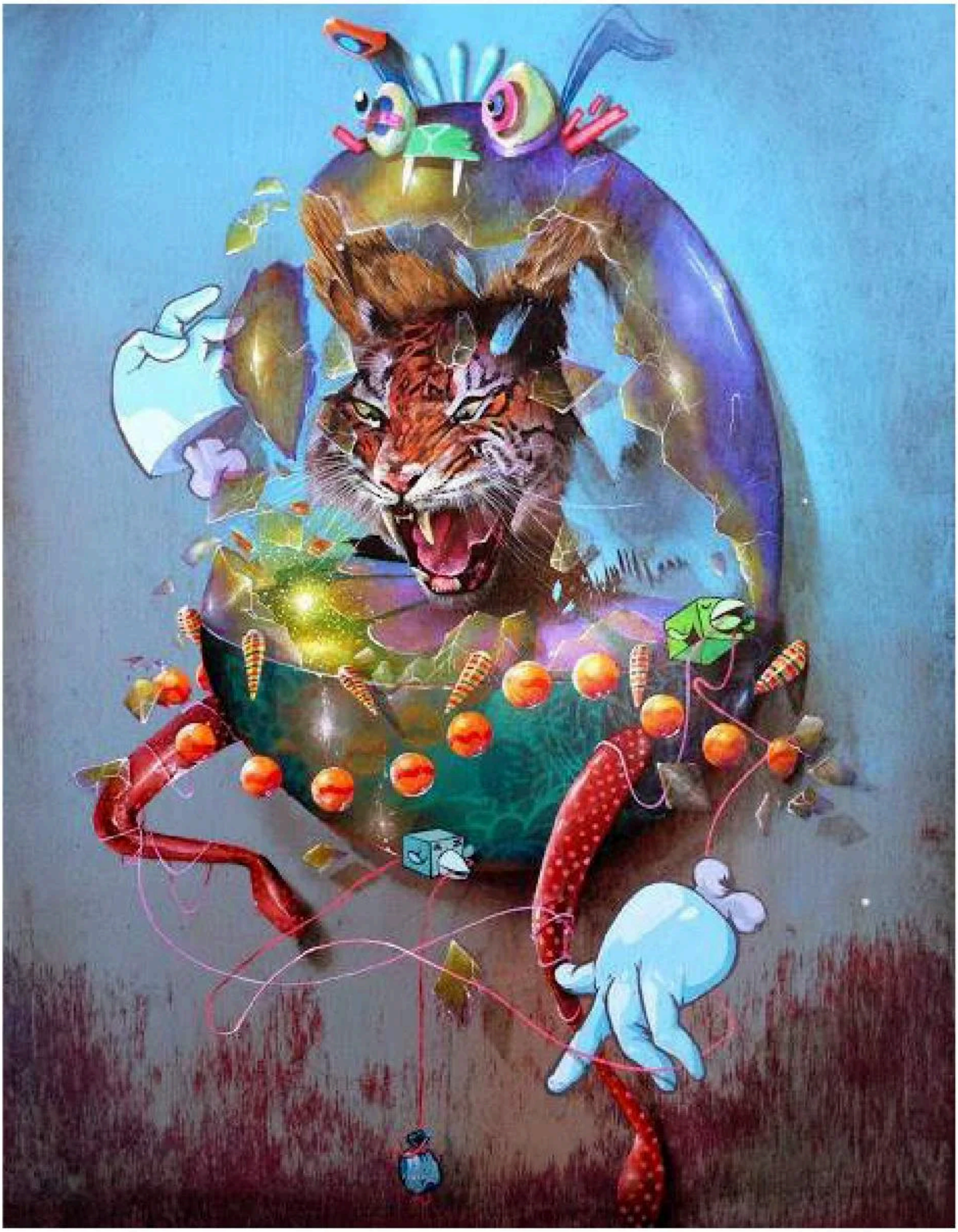
BBB: Many artists feel the desire to leave their hometown for cities like New York or London, do you feel that plays a role in art anymore?

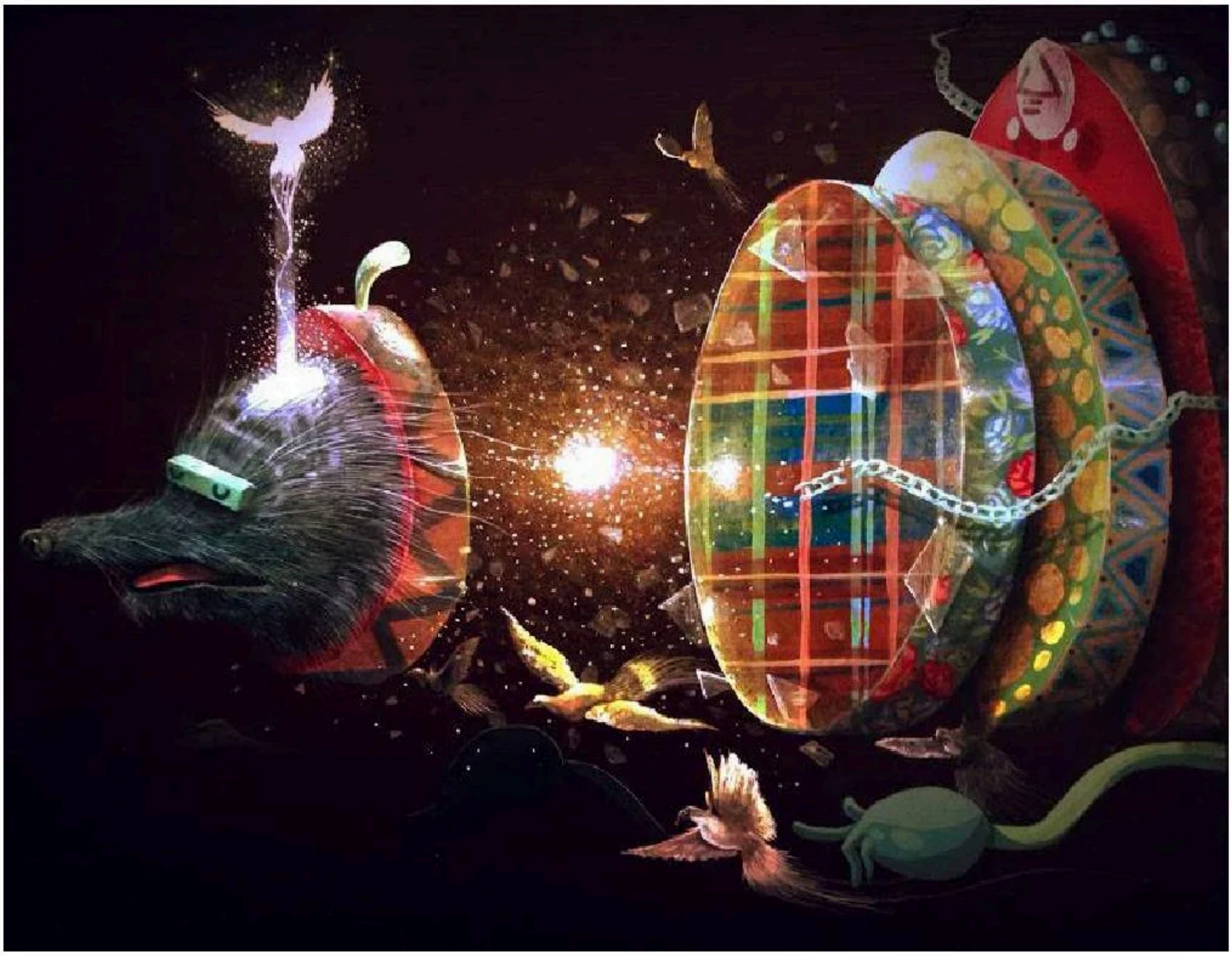
Nosego: I think it just depends on what the artist wants, I think you should live where you desire.

BBB: With the extreme rise in social media, how do you feel this plays a role in the way artists these days create work?









Nosego: I'm not sure, do you think it changes the way people create?

BBB: As artist whose worked with Campbell's, Converse and Vitamin Water, how does collaborating with large corporations affect your creative process?

Nosego: I did those a few years ago but at the time they were fun projects and don't think it affected my creative process.

BBB: With tons of personal work, exhibiting and projects on the go, what can our readers expect from Nosego in the future?

Nosego: At the moment just working on a few new paintings.

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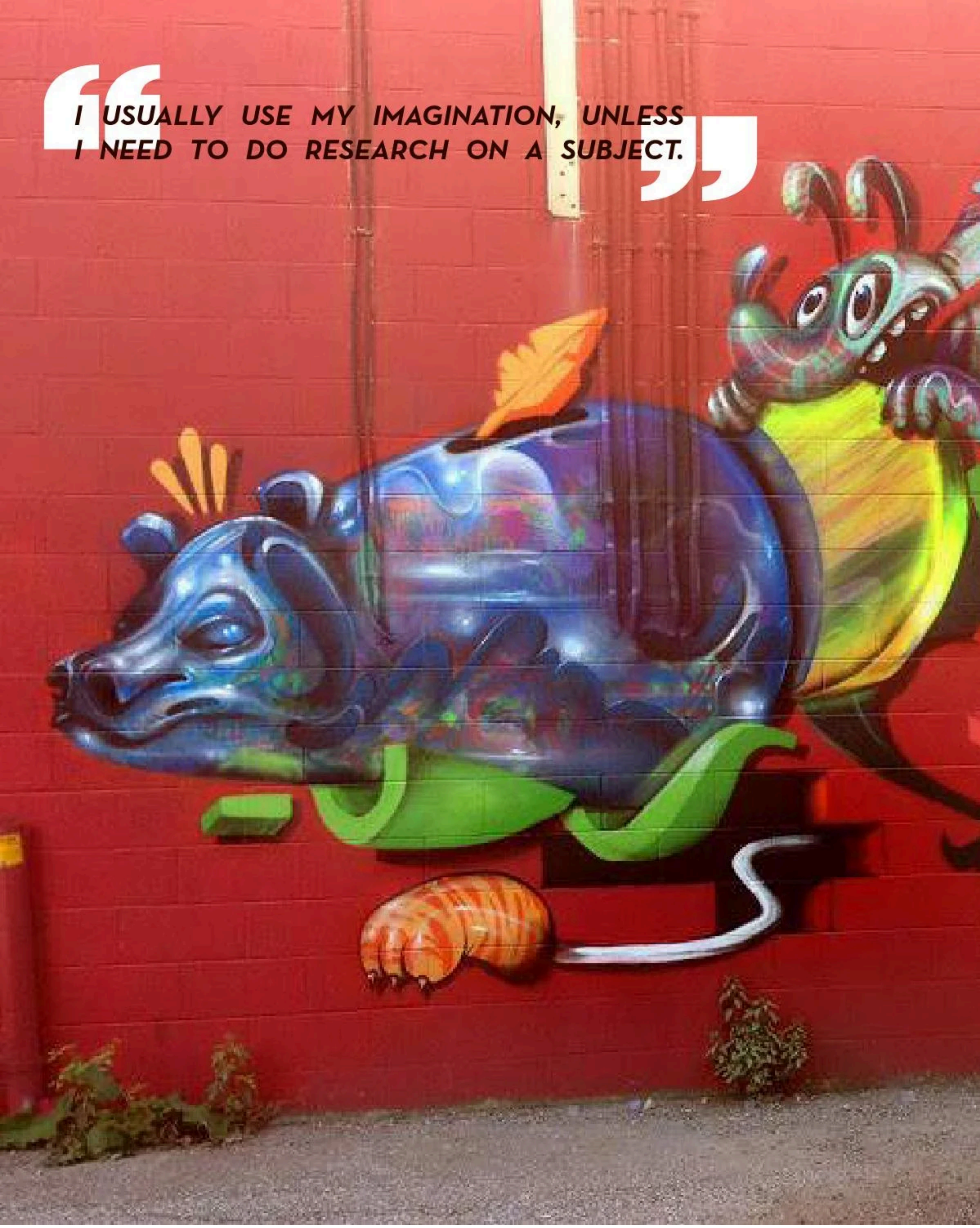
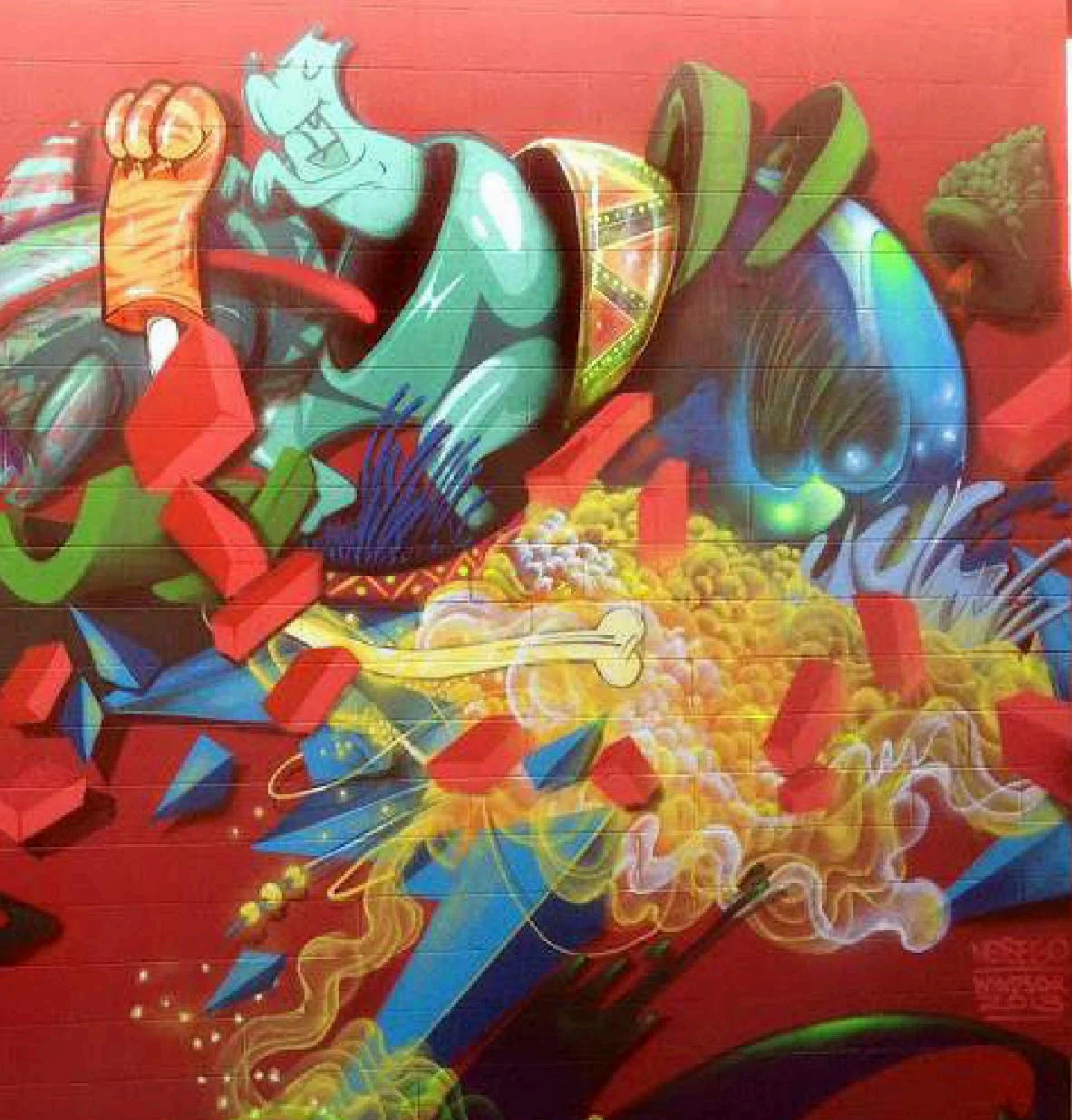
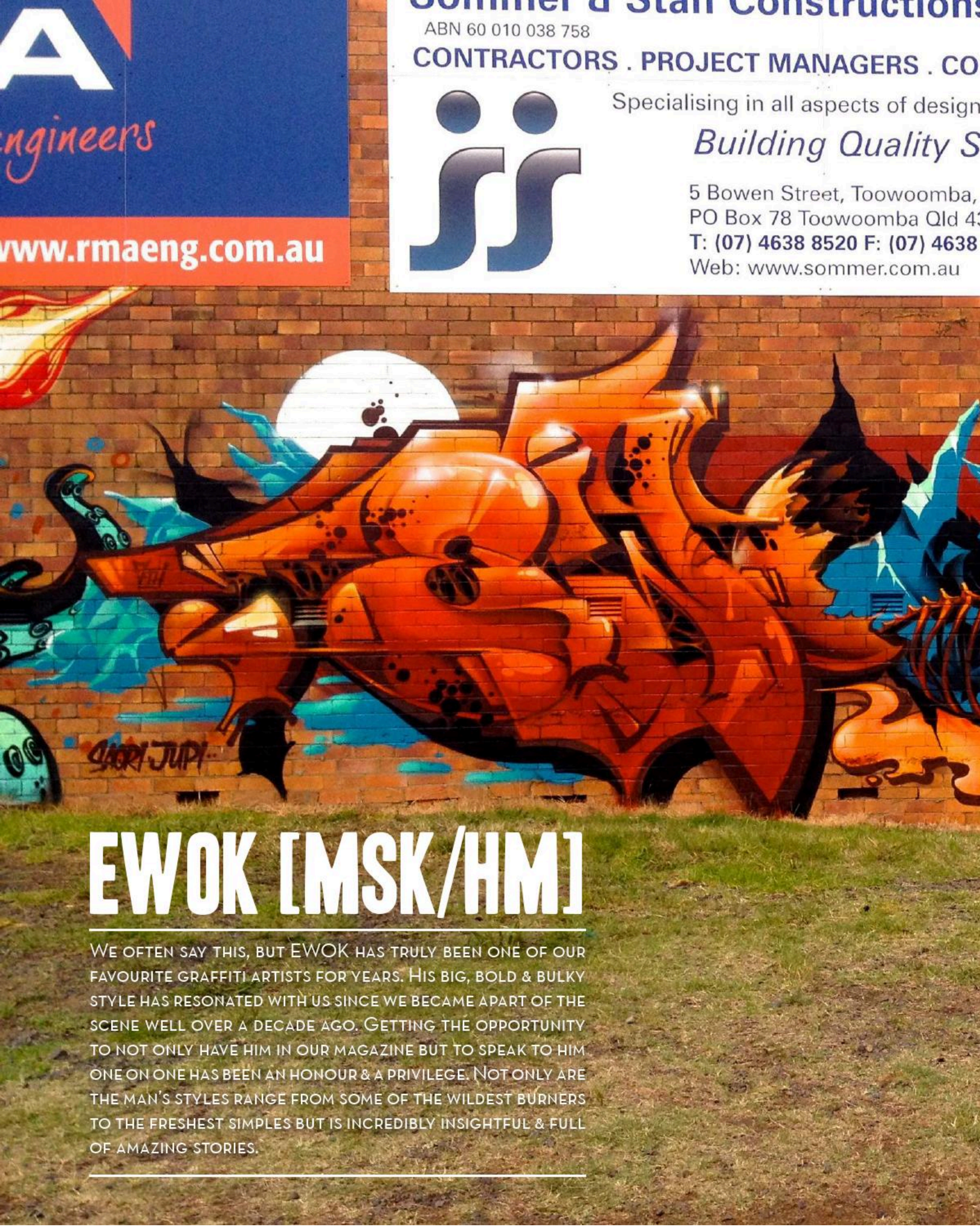
> *I USUALLY USE MY IMAGINATION, UNLESS I NEED TO DO RESEARCH ON A SUBJECT.*



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SAORI JUPI

EWOK [MSK/HM]

We often say this, but EWOK has truly been one of our favourite graffiti artists for years. His big, bold & bulky style has resonated with us since we became apart of the scene well over a decade ago. Getting the opportunity to not only have him in our magazine but to speak to him one on one has been an honour & a privilege. Not only are the man's styles range from some of the wildest burners to the freshest simples but is incredibly insightful & full of amazing stories.

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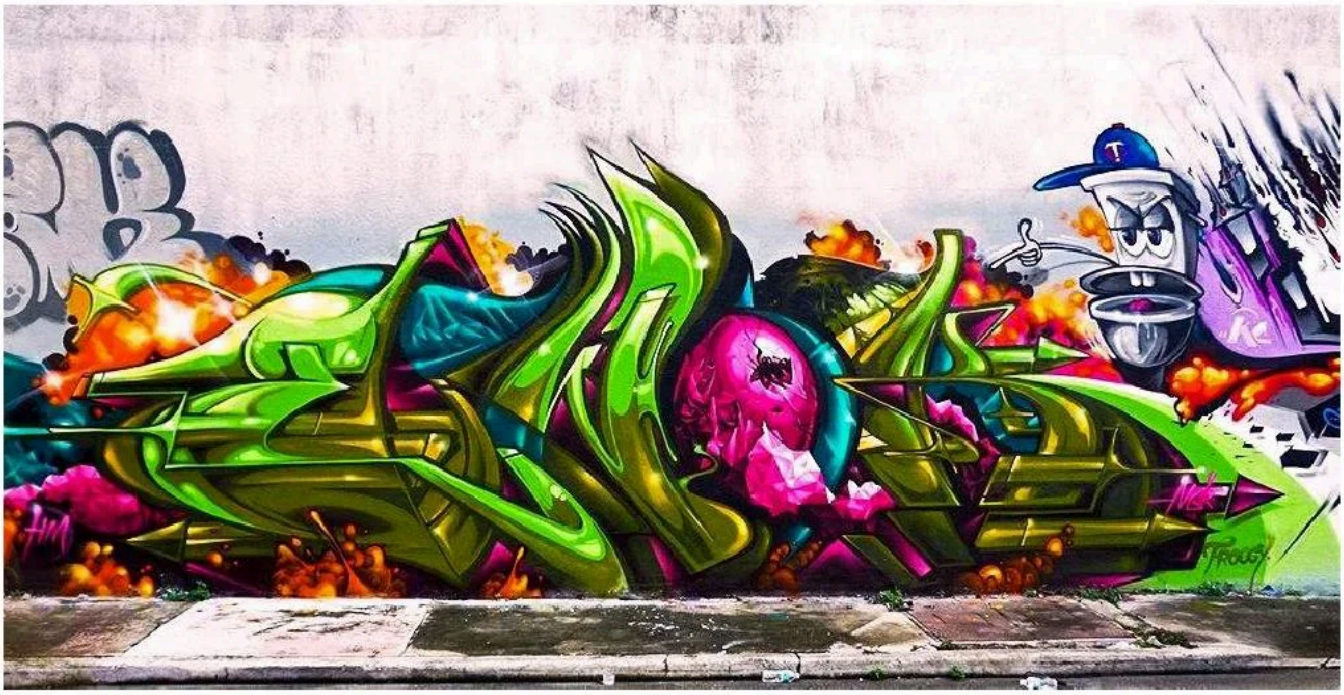


Bizarre Beyond Belief: When was your first interaction with graffiti and what fascinated you enough to paint?

EWOK: I think I first saw graffiti in the opening credits of "Welcome Back Kotter" which was an old TV show during the late 70's. I was probably about 6 or so? I remember seeing the live shots of some subway cars with pieces on them and I was kind of transfixed by it. It was something that always just grabbed my attention early on in my life. There were other random fleeting glimpses of graffiti, tags, bubble letters etc. That I'd see going through Chicago on the way to my grandparents' house in the 80's. I saw a really ill character painted on one of the elevated train stations in-between the freeways when I was about 10. It seemed like they let it run for a long time from what I can remember. I always used to look for it as one of the landmarks on the way. Then when I was in high school I remembered being exposed to more graffiti through skateboarding. I saw Craig Stecyk painting the Rat Bones logos in an empty pool in one of the early Powell Peralta videos and was hyped! I also remember a Powell Peralta ad with Lance Mountain where it was just a photo of him holding up his board showing his grip tape that had been painted with some 'Bones' graffiti-ish letters. I think the 'E' Was made of 3 bombs drooping like 3 stacked horizontal lines.

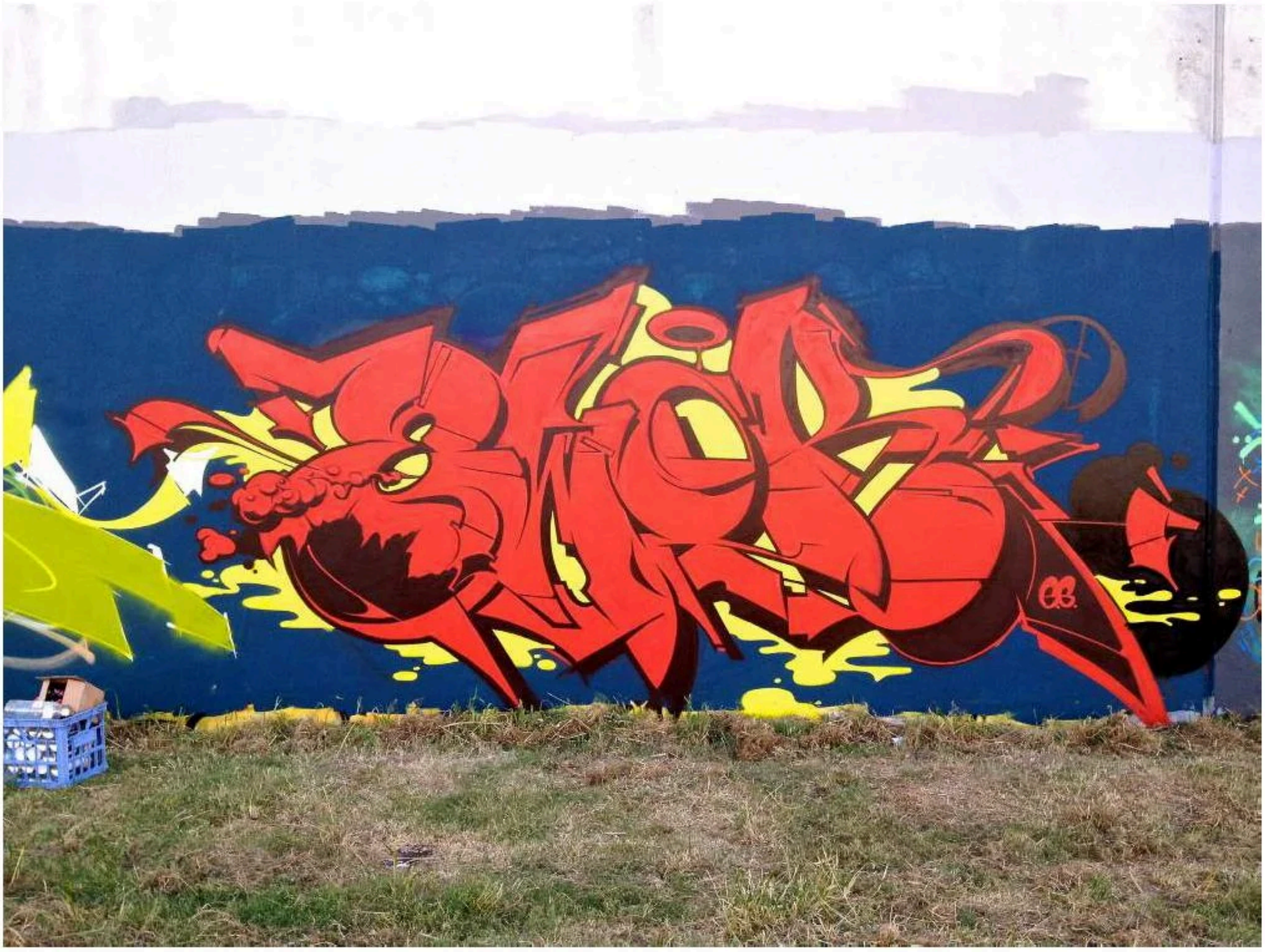
BBB: What was the graffiti landscape like when you first began to write graffiti?

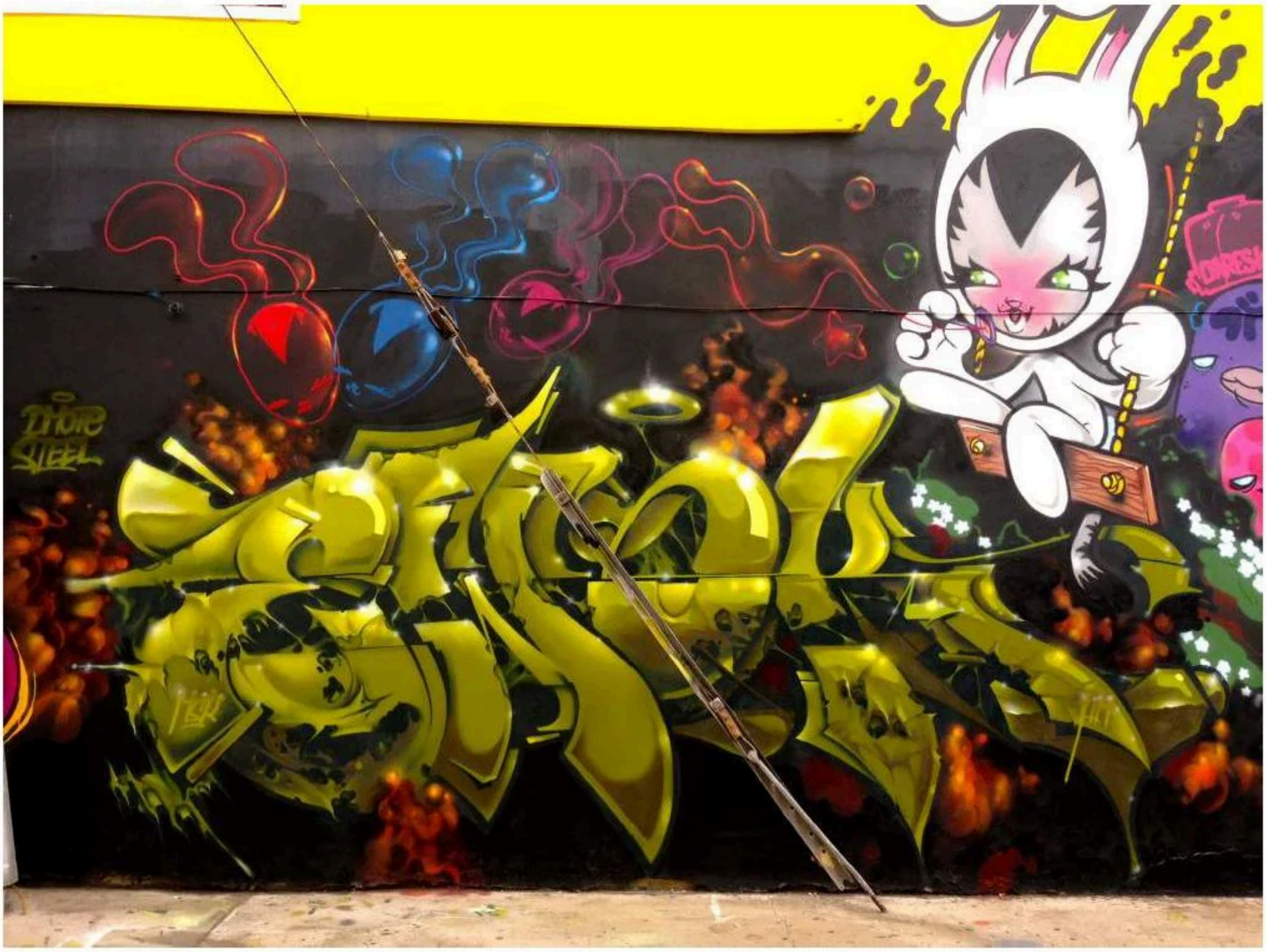
EWOK: Sparse. I think, I thought I was doing graffiti during my Junior or Senior year of high school, but I really had no idea what I was doing. I had a hazy notion of what Graffiti was, but there weren't really any references to learn from. There was hardly any graffiti in Milwaukee at that time, so it was basically just me and my 2 friends Mike (Mber) and Ed, wearing Air Max 90's, baggy jeans and scribbling horrible illegible tags on shit. We didn't have a clue. Then, I think a year or 2 later, I bought "Spraycan Art" and "Subway Art" and that's when things changed. I started learning about the differences between tags, throw-ups and pieces and was kind of beginning to understand what was up. Around the same time I moved to Minneapolis and got to see the beginnings of the scene jumping off over there. There

were already other dudes who had well developed styles there, so I tried to soak up as much information as I could. This was all pre-internet days, so everything was passed down by word of mouth or discovered on your own.

BBB: As a writer who's been active for many years, how has the graffiti culture transformed since you began painting?

EWOK: I have to say the 3 biggest things that have changed since I started were the, disappearance of regional styles, the internet, and the availability of good paint. I feel fortunate that I started painting when I did and where I did. It was really fun and helpful learning from other writers, trading actual printed photos through the mail, discovering new tips to take off of different products at the hardware store or art store etc. Trying to make your own markers out of deodorant containers and shit like that. Learning how to paint using shitty American paint really helped me learn can control and how to make it happen even with shit supplies. Kids today can discover graffiti, buy any tip, paint, marker, book, mag, video all in the same day without leaving the house. I don't have a problem with technology, but I think it was much more of a cool adventure to learn about shit the way I did. It was awesome discovering hardware stores that had dead stock of vintage Krylon cans in the basement and stuff like that. Plus, I think as far as graffiti culture is concerned, there was no endgame to it when I started.

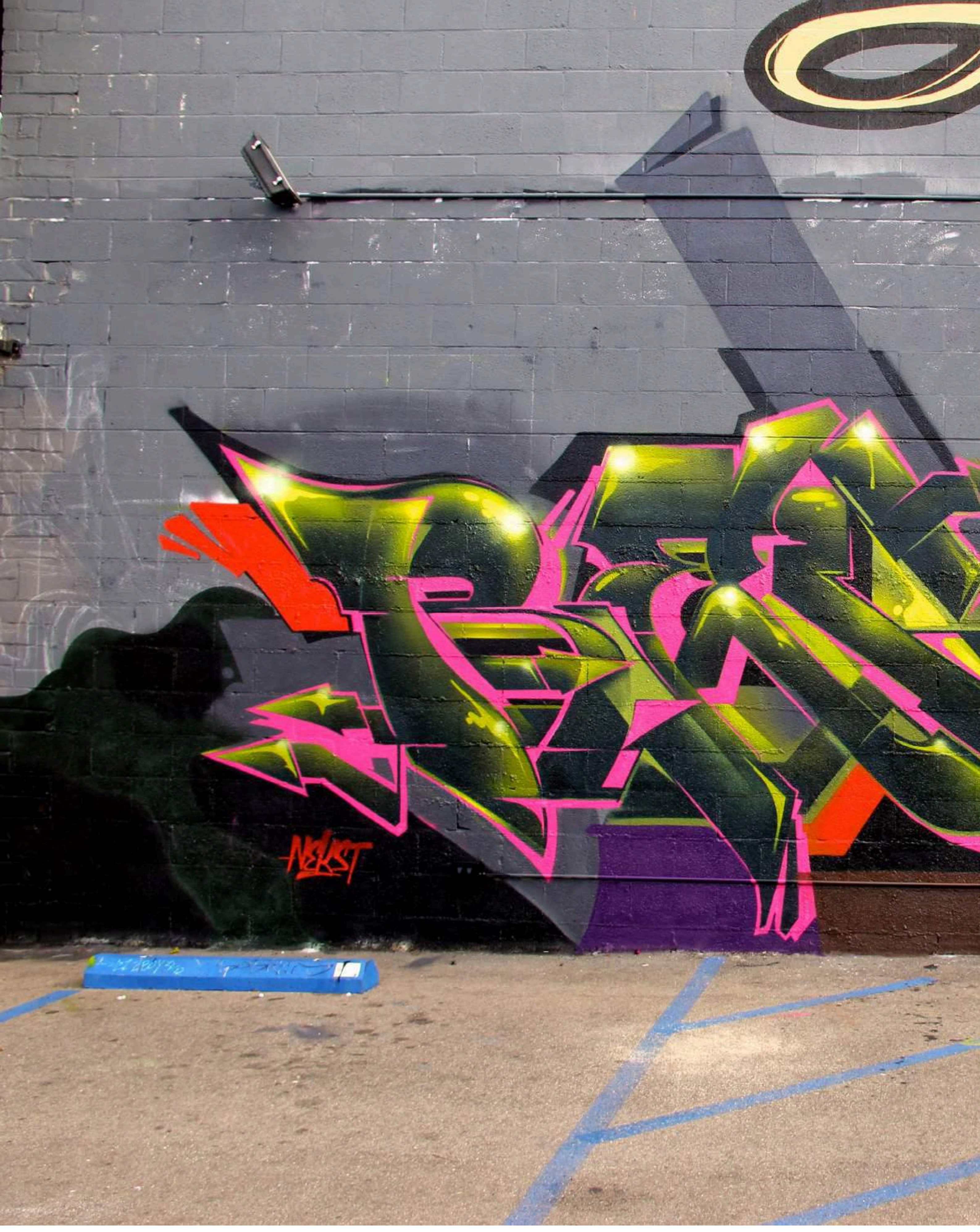




Growing up in the age of Banksy and the whole "Street art" thing, graffiti could actually seem like a viable career path today. That was the furthest thing from my mind and honestly never even seemed like it could be possible. People HATED graffiti, no girls wanted to fuck you because you ran around at night spray painting and there was ZERO incentive to do it other than that it was super fun and fulfilling in ways that I hadn't experienced doing other art. We did it to inspire ourselves and each other.

BBB: Can you describe one of the most intense and nerve racking spots you've ever painted?

EWOK: I painted a piece under this bridge near a college campus and when was leaving the spot I caught a tag on the guard rail on the edge of the road. As I finished, I looked up, and there was a campus police rent-a-cop dude on a mountain bike staring right at me from on top of the bridge. We stared at each other for like 10 seconds and then I saw he slowly raised his walkie talkie to his mouth. I knew he was calling the real police and the station was not that far from there. I had ridden my bike which was about a block away, but there was no way for me to get there without him seeing exactly where I was heading so my only other option was to duck into these woods along the edge of the river on the adjacent side of the street. I ran in there and just stood behind this tree in the dark. About 2 minutes later, I saw a squad car pull up and was about 30 yards from me. The Cop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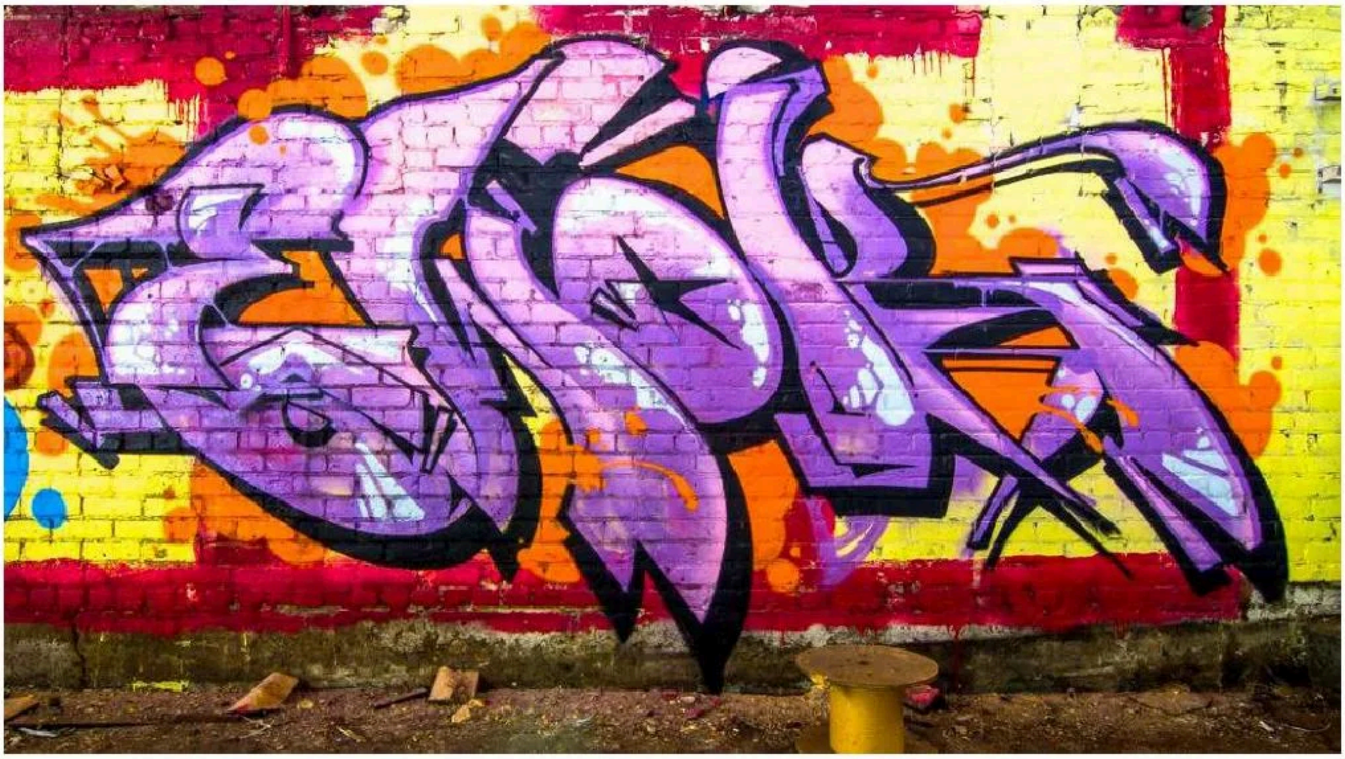


gets out of the car and starts walking into the woods along the same path I'd walked in on with his flashlight and gun out. I laid down and was crawling backwards as he got closer. He was about 25 ft. away when he stopped an just stood there for like a minute. Then he walked back and sat in his car for another half hour/ 45 min. I crawled backwards on my hands and knees to the and clung onto the underside of these tree roots on the edge of this cliff that dropped down to the river below. I waited him out and an hour or so. Later I emerged from the woods, covered in mosquito bites and dripping with sweat, but I didn't get caught - WIN!

BBB: As a writer gaining gallery success, what were the obstacles in transitioning to the fine-art realm from the streets?

EWOK: There was not a transition. In my mind, my fine art doesn't overlap that much with my graffiti. I've been drawing and painting since I was 3 or 4, but I didn't start doing graffiti until I was like 18 or 19. The biggest obstacle in my fine art career is figuring out a balance between what interests me and what people want to buy and hang in their living room.

BBB: The streets and canvases differ immensely in scale, how do you approach the different mediums?

EWOK: Doing pieces is a more immediate and more improvisational. It also has the benefit of having an instant audience. Especially with Instagram and Tumblr and all that, it's crazy to be able to follow the entire world's graffiti output in almost real time. Whereas, working in the studio on fine art stuff is more introspective and calculated. The goal and the motivation behind it is much different. In some ways its trying to create a viable product that represents a part of you or your personality. The gallery game seems to be the pursuit of building a "brand" that is marketable. I think I've gotten pretty good at building a brand that's not marketable at all.

BBB: How do you feel the rise of technology and social media has

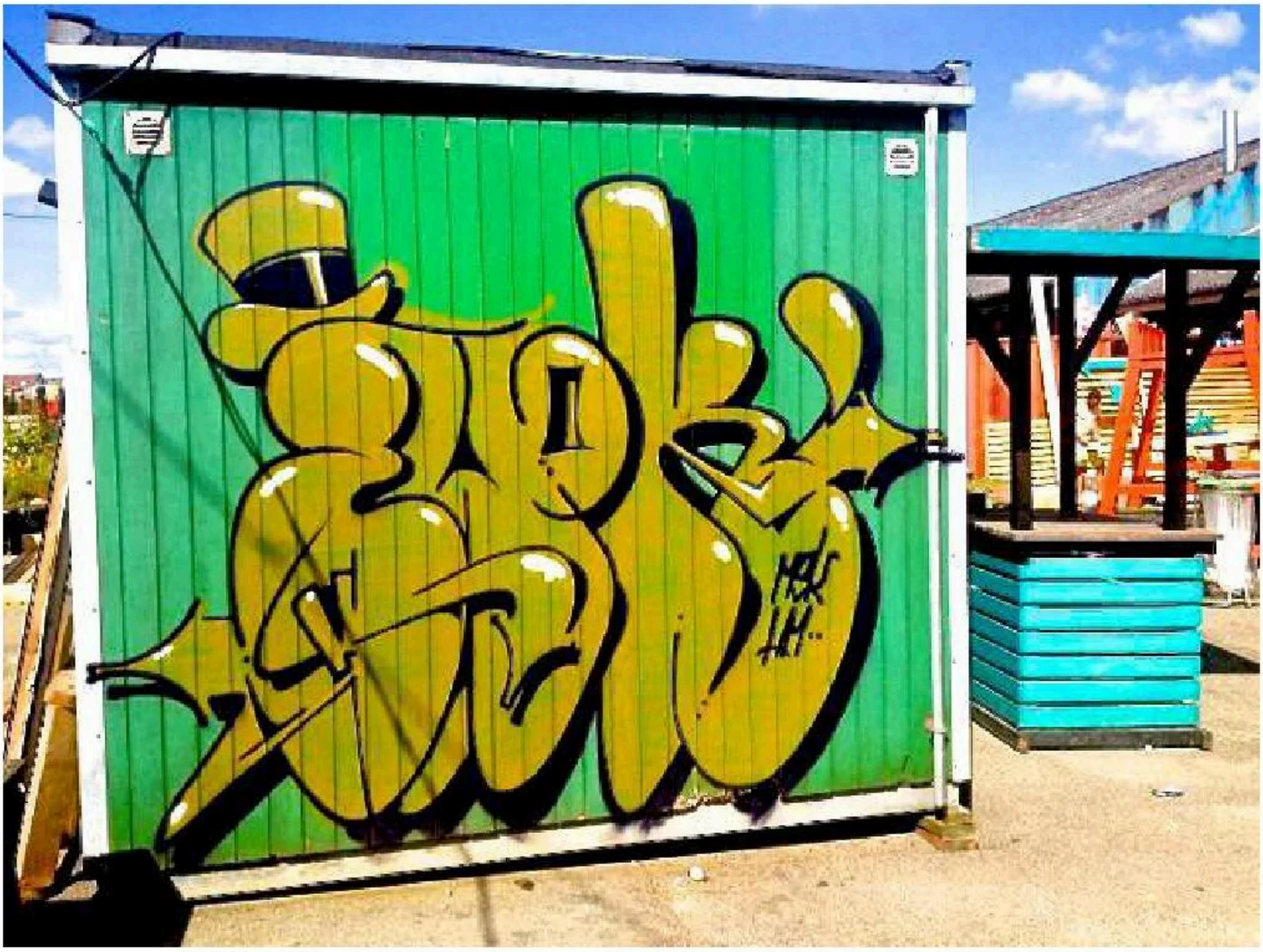
> KIDS TODAY CAN DISCOVER GRAFFITI, BUY ANY TIP, PAINT, MARKER, BOOK, MAG, VIDEO ALL IN THE SAME DAY WITHOUT LEAVING THE HOUSE.

played a factor in the current graffiti ideology?

EWOK: Like everything else, I think it provides instant gratification. You can chart how many 'likes' and 'views' you have on whatever you did that day where as before, you had no idea who saw it or what they thought about your work unless you spoke to them directly. I think every advance in technology has its good and bad points. I feel fortunate that I started painting before all the social media bullshit, so I never have to second-guess my motives for doing what I do.

BBB: As a well traveled graffiti artist, what city or cities are your favourite to paint in and why?

EWOK: I don't have any favourite places to paint, walls are pretty much the same everywhere. I like painting, it doesn't matter where it is. I enjoy painting in places where there is hardly any graffiti. It's interesting to see people's genuine unbiased reactions to it. In the United States, there's so much negative propaganda around it that most civilians won't even give it a chance. They already hate it the second they know it's supposed to be some letters done with spray paint. The experience painting in different cities and different countries is pretty much the same but all the cultural stuff - the food, the language and customs is what is interesting to me. That's one of the best things I've gotten out of graffiti; seeing the world, meeting people from all over and having friends



who I would have never known if I hadn't started vandalizing shit 20-odd years ago. If I had to pick based on overall experience I'd say: Auckland, Tokyo, Bogotá. Also, Croatia and Taipei were some of the most memorable trips I've been on.

BBB: How would you say these compare and contrast to your native city?

EWOK: I don't know if there is any real comparison. Every place I've been has its own vibe and uniqueness to it. Being home is just; whatever. Its cool, its where I work and sleep. Traveling is when I feel alive.

BBB: What three things outside of graffiti/art could you absolutely not live without?

EWOK: Friends, traveling, and my radio (shout-out to LL).

BBB: If you're painting a wall or blasting a studio session, what top 5 albums would be on your playlist?

EWOK: Oddly, I hardly ever listen to music that much when I paint. I think listening to podcasts or political talk shows helps me settle into working when I'm at the studio.
Painting a wall:
•Outkast "Aquemini" - One of the best albums ever.
•Anything By 2 Chainz - his shit gets me hyped and gets my energy up.
•Black Sabbath Vol. 4 or anything from that era of Black Sabbath.
•Anything by Pink Floyd - makes me disappear into my brain and get weird.
•Problem "The Separation." Gangster rap always make you feel invincible.

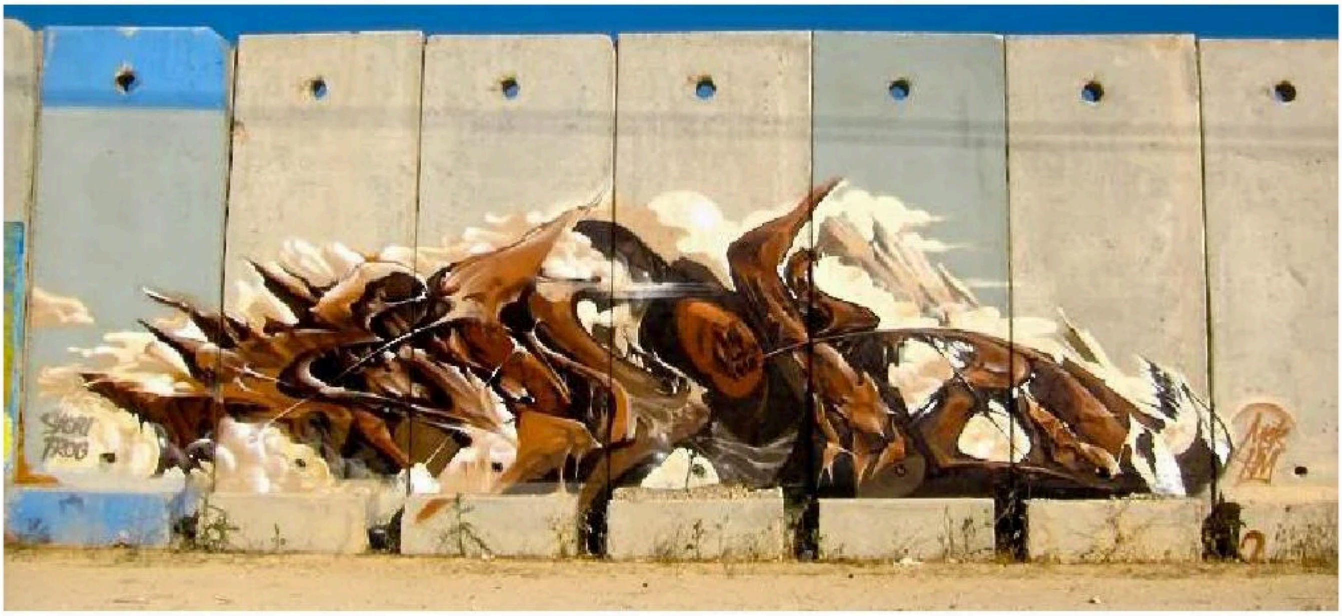
This list will probably change weekly.

BBB: With so many things on the go, where do you see yourself as in individual and an artist in 5, 10 & 20 years?

EWOK: No idea. I'd like to live overseas at some point, but haven't figured out where yet. Making a decent living would be good at some point. Fingers crossed!

* * *

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EWOKHM



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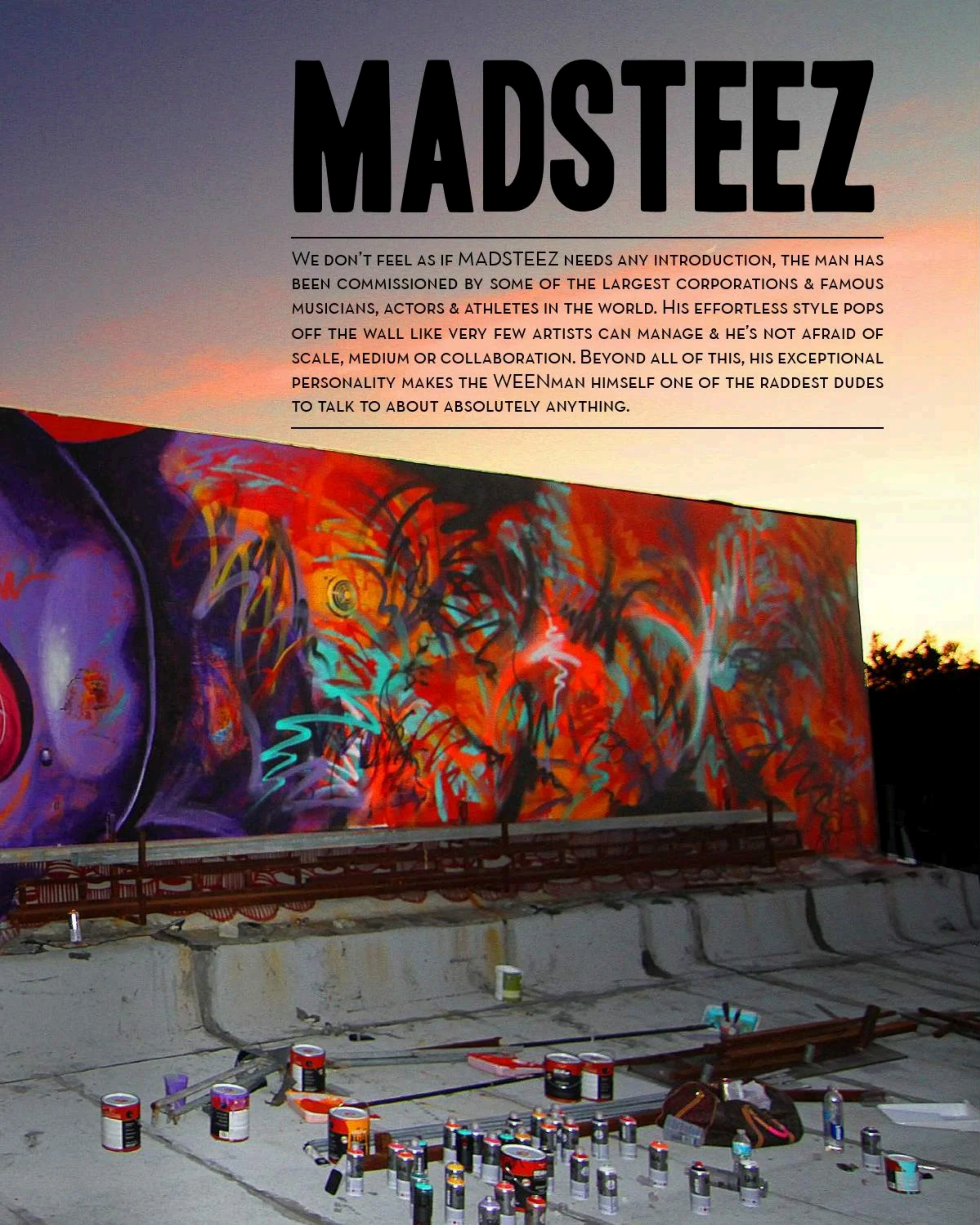
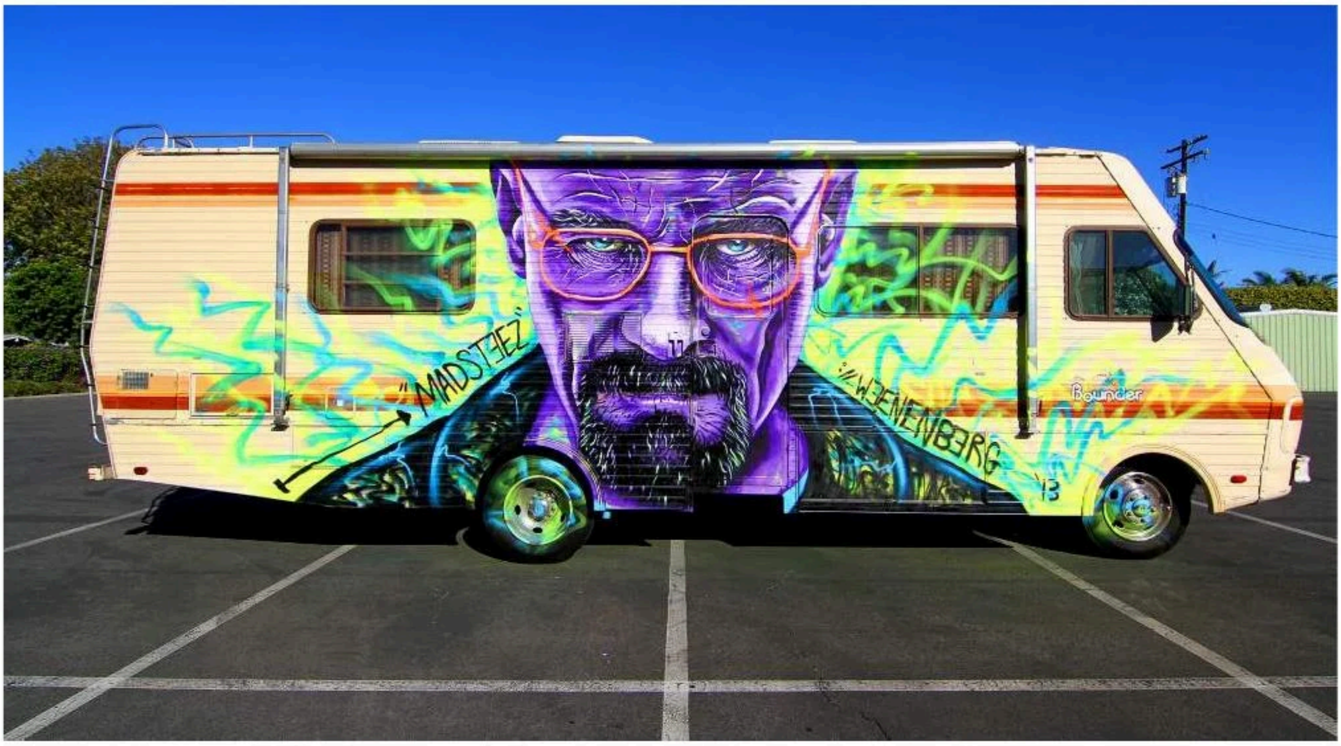
"MADST3EZ"
BA

MADSTEEZ

We don't feel as if MADSTEEZ needs any introduction, the man has been commissioned by some of the largest corporations & famous musicians, actors & athletes in the world. His effortless style pops off the wall like very few artists can manage & he's not afraid of scale, medium or collaboration. Beyond all of this, his exceptional personality makes the WEENman himself one of the raddest dudes to talk to about absolutely anything.





Bizarre Beyond Belief: As an artist born with partial blindness, did this at all affect your dreams of being a prolific artist?

Madsteez: Not at all. If anything, I feel like it gives me a unique perspective that only I can see. I'm currently working on a body of work that is my interpretation on how I see out of my blind eye.

BBB: Evidently very little is known about your current place of residence, how would you describe the community and artistic landscape of WEEN!SVILLE?

Madsteez: As you pass through a mystical parade of "WEENaflow" there you can find a happy gathering of magical cryptozoological creatures playing ring toss with prancing WEENicorns. A rainbow crackles on the horizon. Just as you pull back into the main suburbs and follow a confusing network of freeways to WEENhattan, a swarm of WEENmatis' devour everything green until you find a halfway burnt down sign saying, WEENsv!lle.

BBB: Would you say this is a far more appropriate place to create work than other major cities in the U.S?

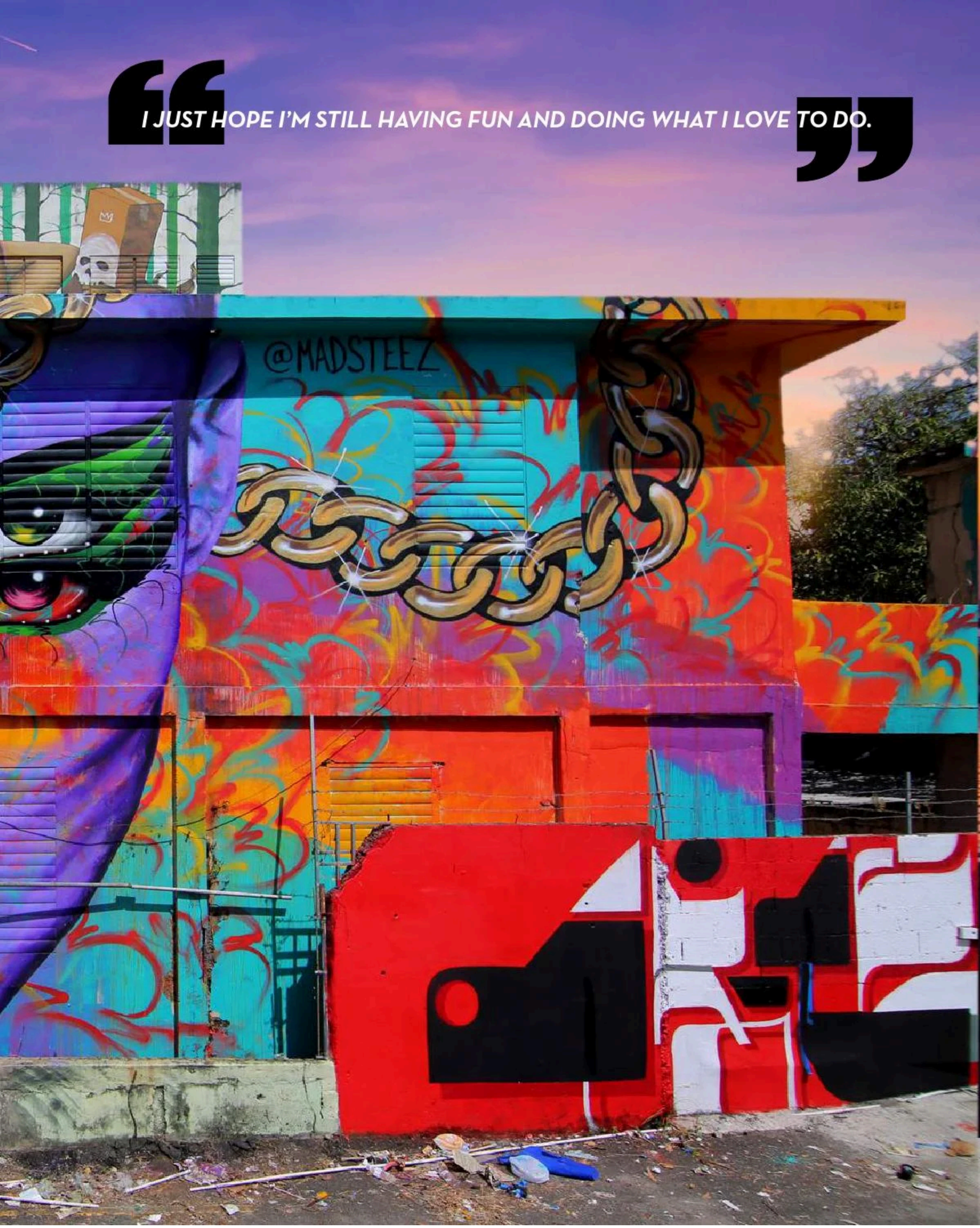
Madsteez: There are times I get bored of WEENsville but it's the only place I can comfortably operate and go to my local HEYD!K'S Big box department store which replicates on top of each other faster and faster like a reverse pyramid of Lego blocks.

BBB: What is a WEEN!MALS and what genetic or ideological makeup make them different than a dog or cat?

Madsteez: AllahWEEN created the Sub-atomic WEENparticle. The Sub-atomic WEENparticle laid dormant for millions of years but a black whole created Mr.WEEN. Mr.WEEN then spread his seed amongst the WEEN!verse and created DNA hybrids such as; WEENshark, WEENcow, WEENgiraffe, WEENefant, etc. etc.

@MADSTEEZ

@ZAYASART



> *I JUST HOPE I'M STILL HAVING FUN AND DOING WHAT I LOVE TO DO.*

Compton
(d)³
MVRK
PVUL
D∃REN
#"MΛDST∃EZ"
FIRE DEPARTMENT
WILL RESPOND
TAKE

BBB: We've read that Dennis Hopper will forever be an inspiration to you (hence the painting), what other prominent figures in society influence you, both in your work and as an individual?

Madsteez: I saw a Richard Jackson show several months ago and it just blew me away. I had never heard of him before and he literally flipped my wig. The scale and magnitude of is concepts and installations were something I'd like to aspire to. It was also incredible because a lot of his work was made in the early 80's and I feel like now it's finally caught up to the time-period.

BBB: As an artist who's worked with massive corporations like Nike, Stussy and Boost Mobile to name a few, how does your creative process change when working with such companies?

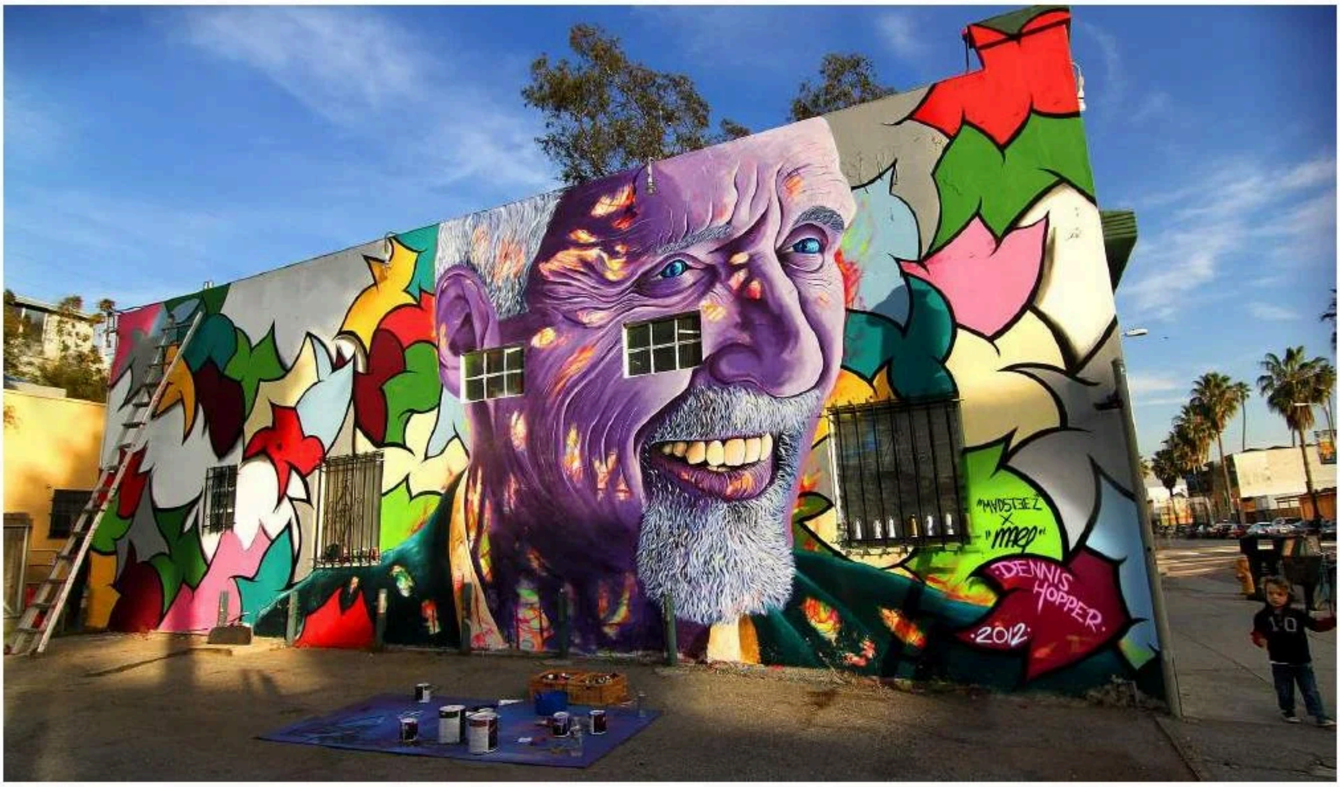
Madsteez: Every "corporate" commission has a different approach. Sometimes there's a creative brief where you have to be within certain guidelines, sometimes there's budget constraints and there's always a super crazy tight deadline. It does happen, but rarely do they let you do what you wanna do entirely.

BBB: Have you ever had to jeopardize your artistic integrity or style to complete a project?

Ha ha ha...No comment!

BBB: You've painted and exhibited in cities all over the world, what city is the most fun to paint in and why?

Madsteez: Each city has its own pluses and minuses but I'm going to



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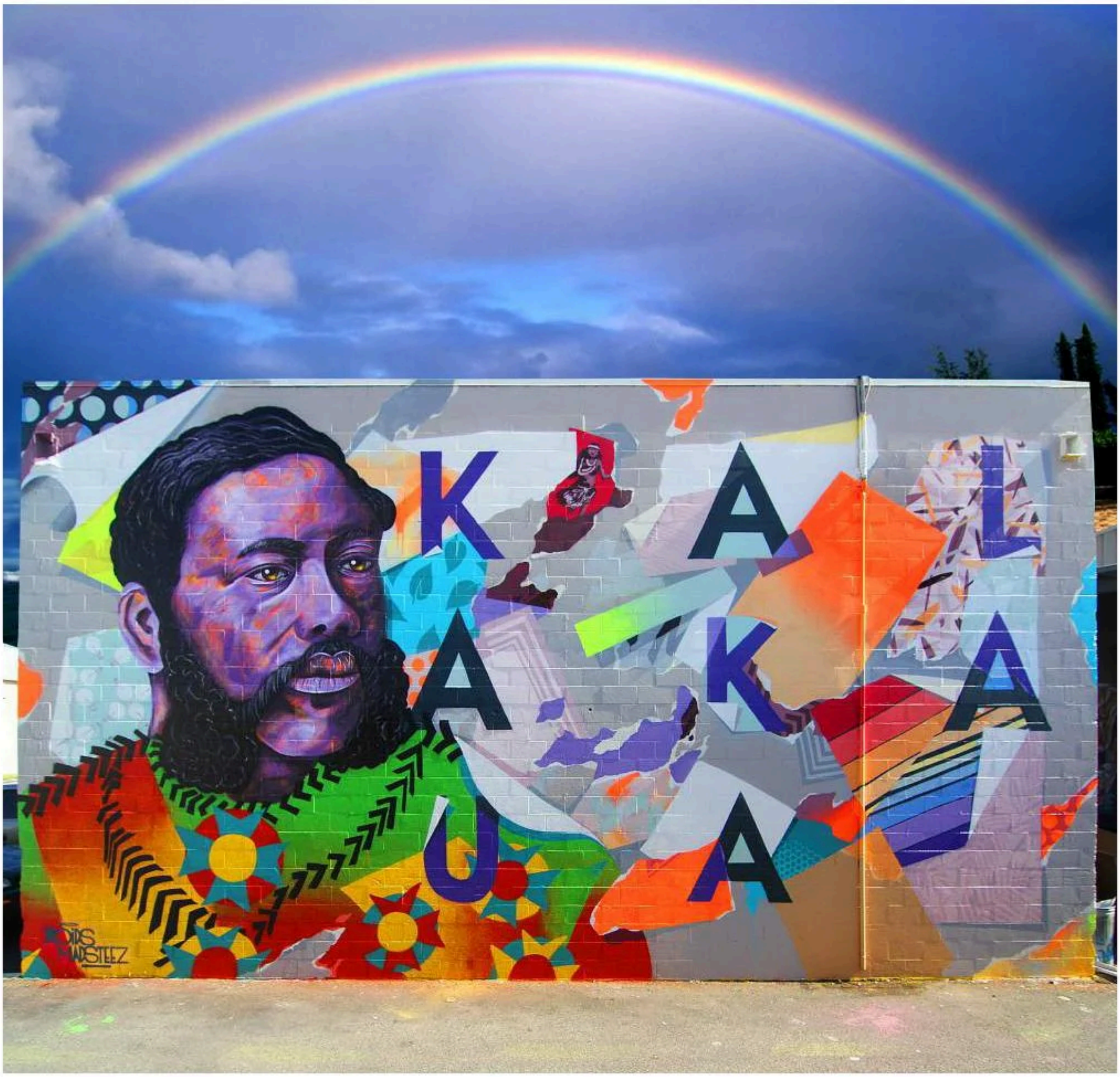

have to say my latest mission to Puerto Rico might just have been my funnest. It's an American territory so it's pretty easy to communicate and navigate. It's kind of like anarchy in the streets, there seems to be no rules and you can do what ever you want. There's a huge art scene going down right now and all the locals really appreciate it. To top it off, there are some of the best waves in the world there. I unfortunately was there during the wrong season but come winter time, I'm going back!

BBB: And what city is the most disturbing, complicated or not-chill city to paint in?

Madsteez: China was probably the most difficult place I've painted in. Spray paint doesn't really exist and the local paint shops only carry like 3 colors, red, yellow and white. It's impossible to communicate and theres definitely a fear in the back of your mind that you are in a communist country. The sketchiest place I painted was in the cut in New Jersey. I was painting a Shaq mural on Malcolm X Shabazz High School and there was literally 5 shootings on the surrounding blocks from where I was painting. The police kept coming by every 30 minutes or so and told me to hurry up because it wasn't safe for me to paint, especially past dark.

BBB: How would you describe your work to a blind person?

Madsteez: LOUD AS FUCK!!!!

BBB: If you're blasting tunes in your headphones during a long day of painting, what top five albums would be in your playlist?

Madsteez: I absolutely can't listen to an entire album through so I run my shit on shuffle. Some of my faves are Wu-tang, A Tribe Called Quest, Beach Fossils, Connan Mockasin and Del Shannon.

BBB: With so many projects and events on the go, where does MADSTEEZ see himself in 5, 10 and 25 years?

Madsteez: That's a great question that I don't have the answer to. Shit's been getting real so I've recently been doing some long term planning. I just hope I'm still having fun and doing what I love to do.

WWW.MADSTEEZ.COM

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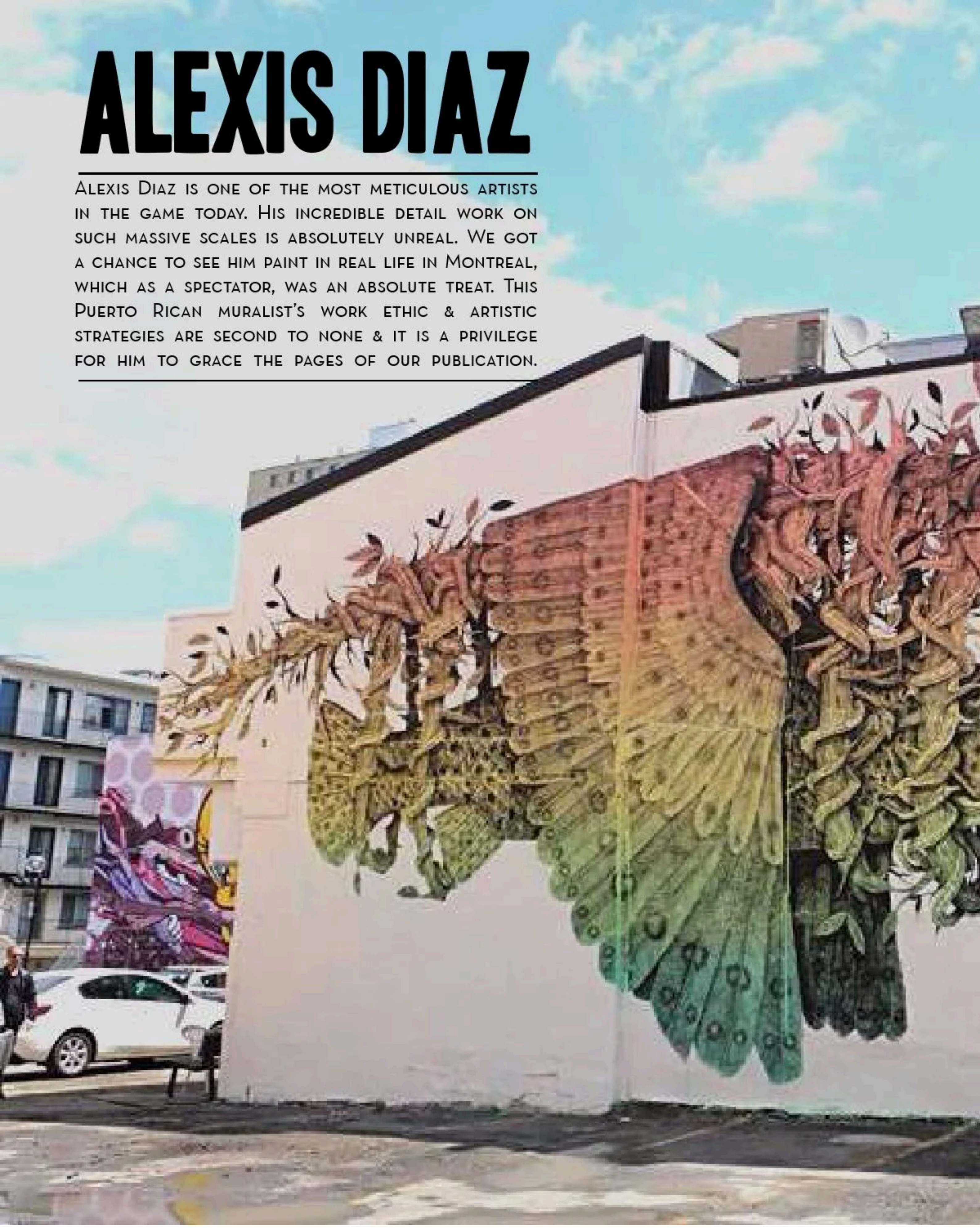
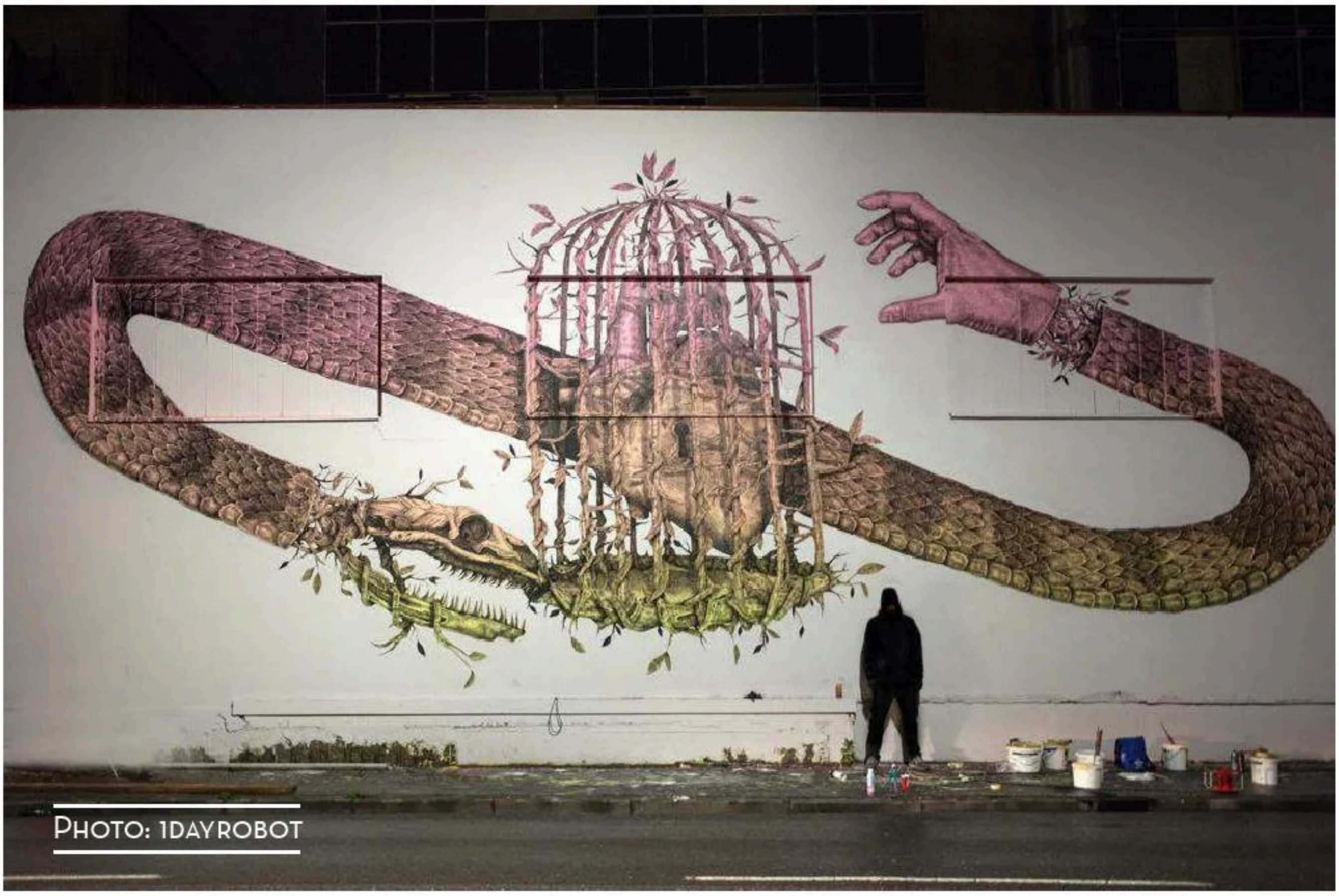
ALEXIS DIAZ

Alexis Diaz is one of the most meticulous artists in the game today. His incredible detail work on such massive scales is absolutely unreal. We got a chance to see him paint in real life in Montreal, which as a spectator, was an absolute treat. This Puerto Rican muralist's work ethic & artistic strategies are second to none & it is a privilege for him to grace the pages of our publication.





Bizarre Beyond Belief: Where are you from and can you describe your origins as a muralist?

Alexis Diaz: I'm from Puerto Rico, the island of enchantment. Back in 2010 I did my first wall just to have fun and enjoy myself. Since then, I became an addict!

At my very beginning, the ink of an old printer was the material that made way to my imaginary. With no intentions of doing murals, I started with the walls of my apartment. If I had used chalk back then instead of ink, maybe that will be my preferred medium nowadays.

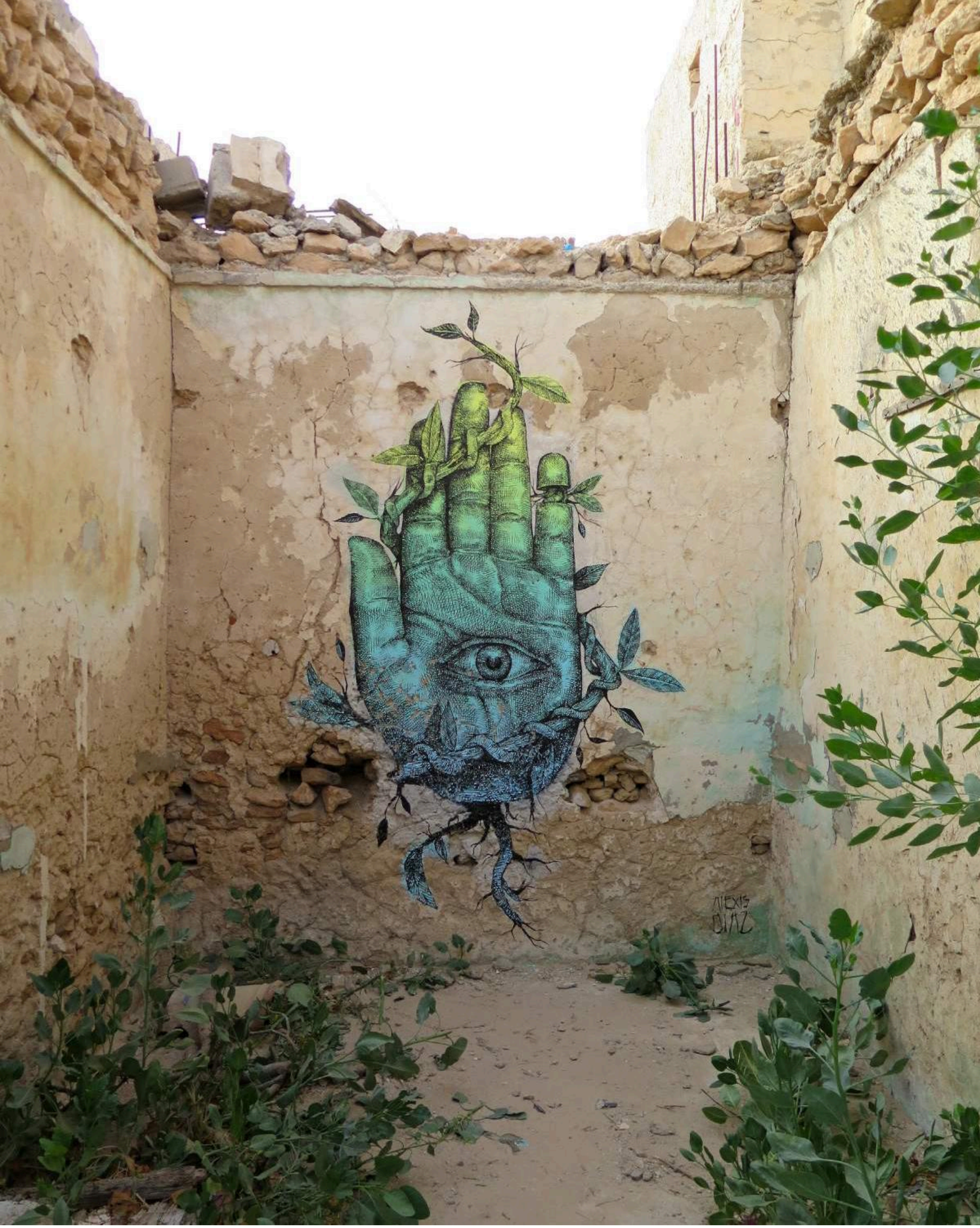
BBB: What would you say the artistic landscape is like in your home town?

AD: At the beginning, it started with graffiti and the city had his boom until 2005/2006 because of prohibition policies. In 2011, the first international festival took place here entitled "Los Muros Hablan". By that time street art was beginning to revive among local artists. After that, the scene became established and now Puerto Rico is well known because more than 20 international well known artists have came there to paint. There is a come back from all the artists, not only from street art, but in the context of galleries.

BBB: As an artist who's traveled to a number of cities throughout the world, how does your city compare to others?

AD: It's impossible to compare them, every city is different. Each one of them has its magic.

BBB: If you were to choose your 3 favourite cities to paint in, which would they be and why?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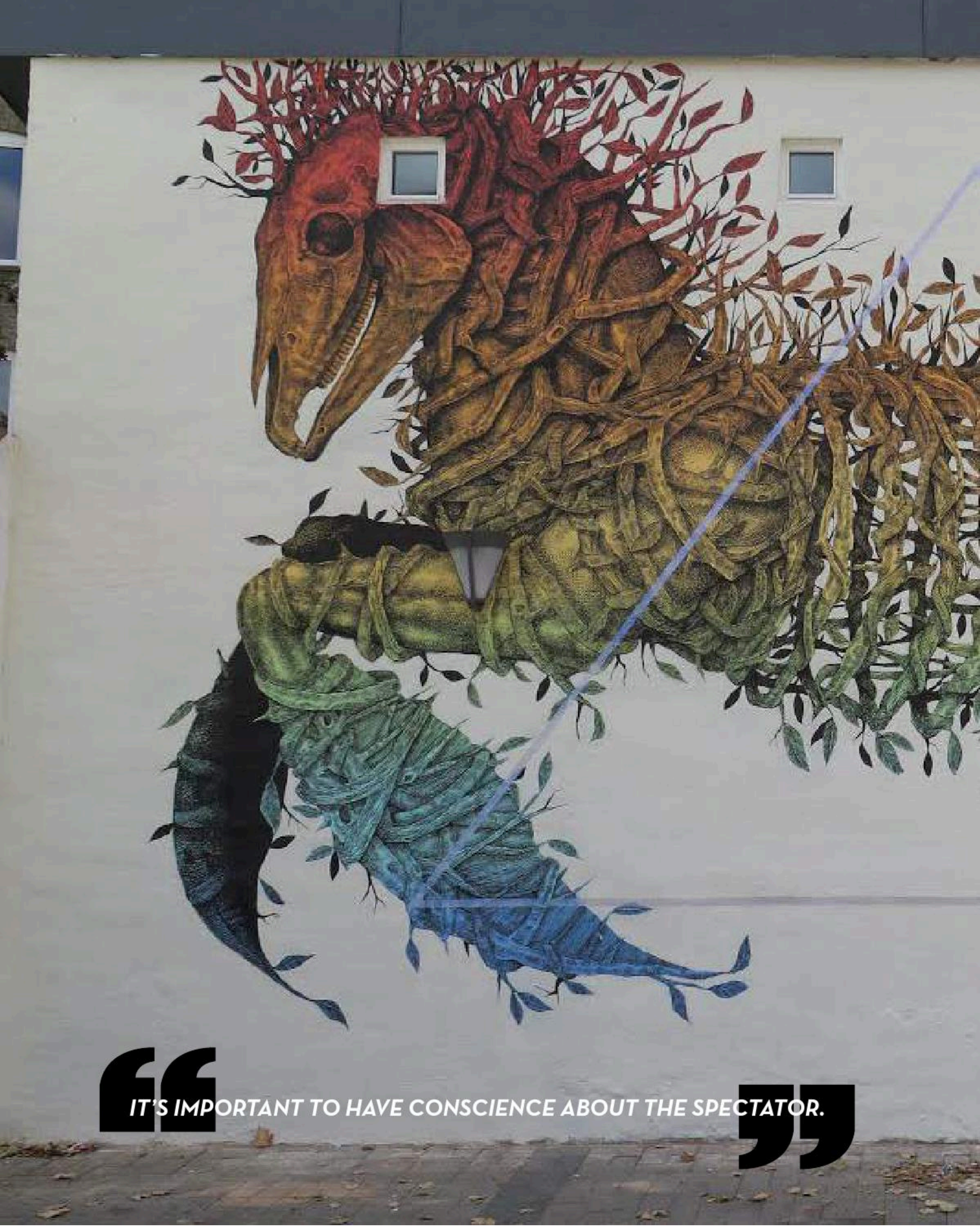
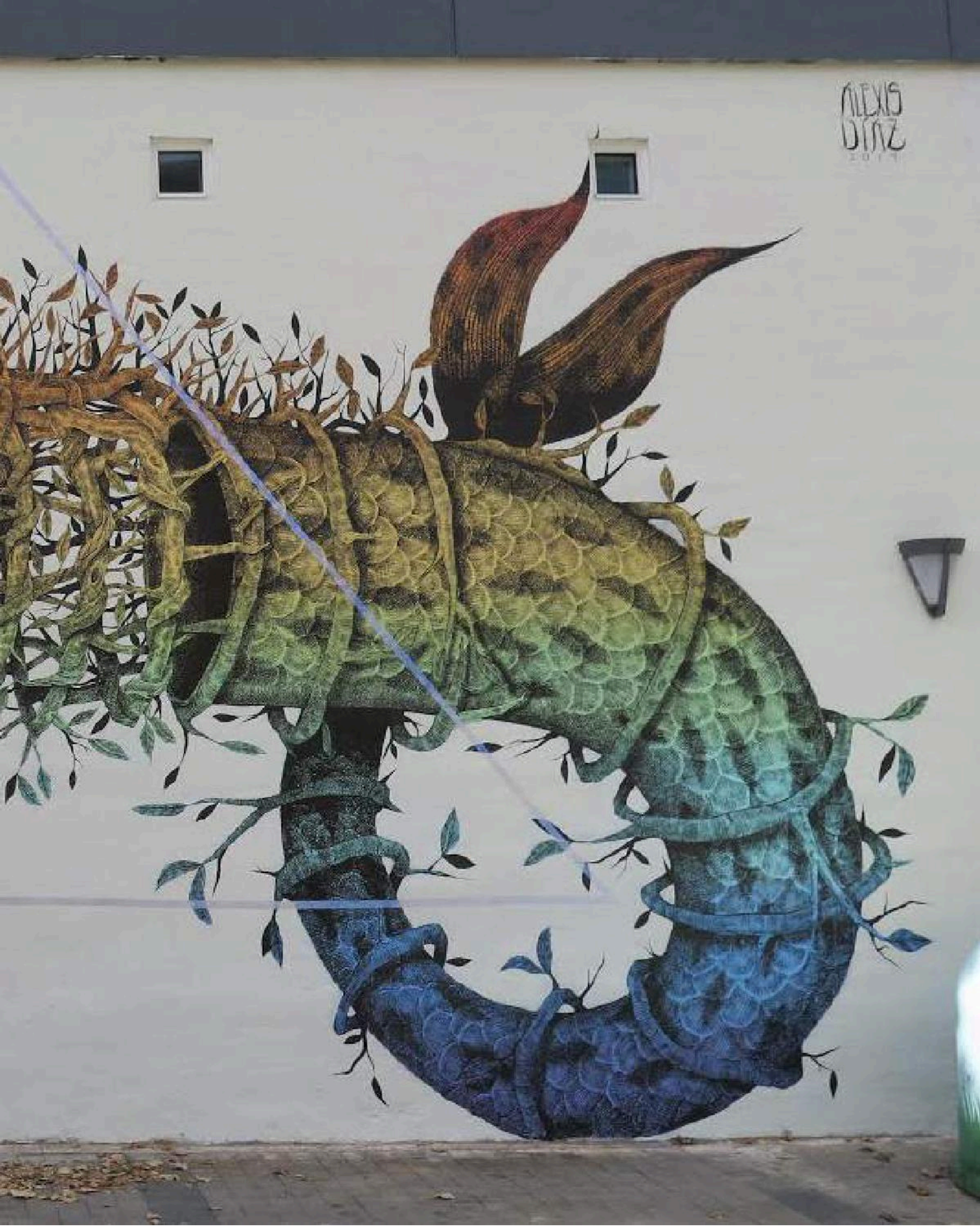


> *IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE CONSCIENCE ABOUT THE SPECTATOR.*


ALEXIS
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2014

AD: Places that inspire to create in relationship with the surroundings. Where there is nature such as; The Painted Desert Project (Arizona, USA); PUBLIC Festival (Australia, Perth), Djerbahood (Tunisia).

BBB: As much of your work is surreal in style, how do you conceptualize a piece of work?

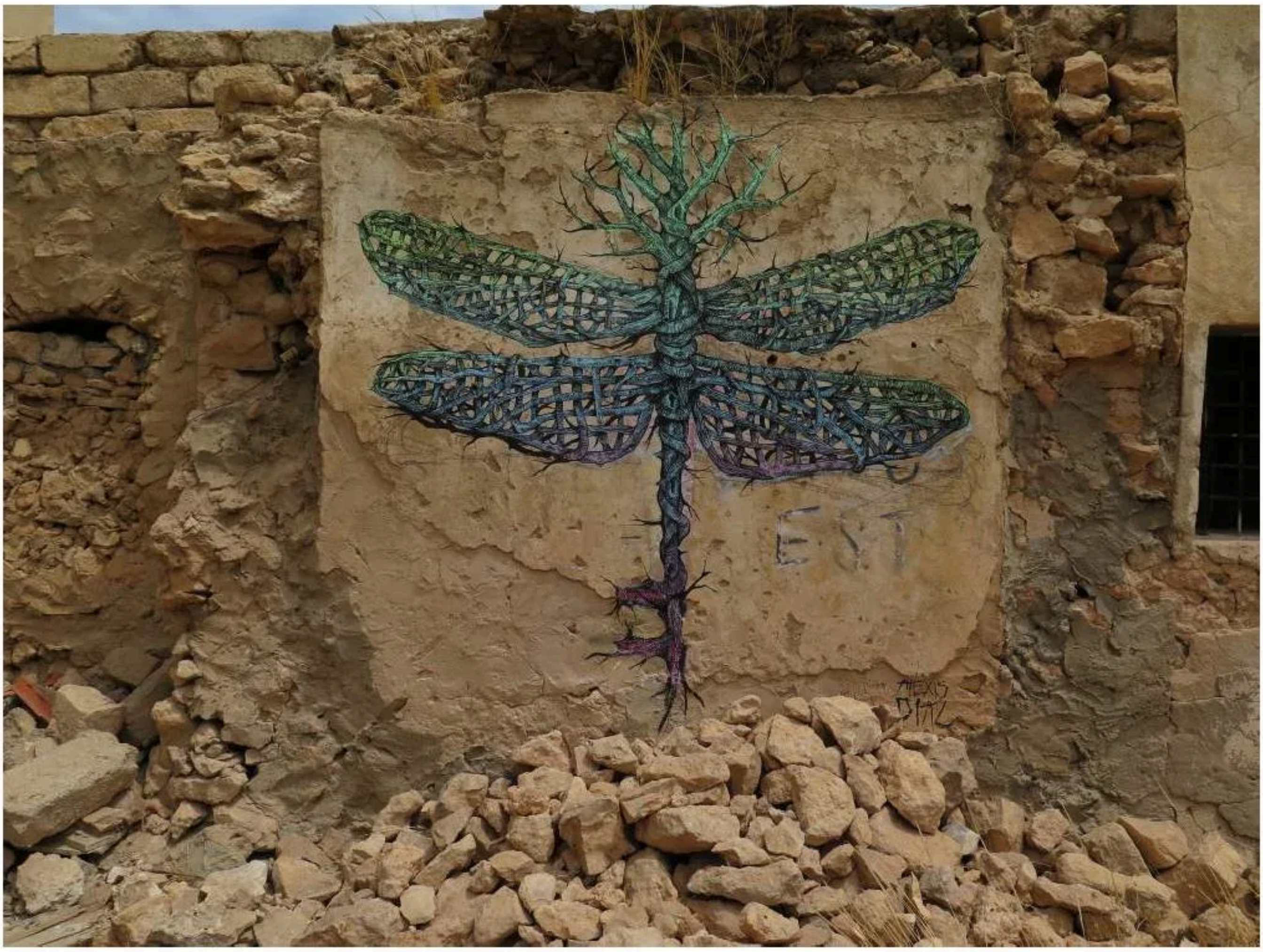
AD: My inspiration comes from all areas. Everything around me is a source. Nature, music, dawning every day and life itself. Each place I visit, I create my own creatures, species able to adapt to the context, which evolve. Hence the fusion. Elements or symbols that have some link to the place or what I feel in place.

BBB: Do your murals come out exactly as planned or do they transform throughout the process?

AD: I never have a plan, I don't work with sketches. It's always transforming itself in the process. Evolving and changing every day. Ideas are popping up nonstop.

BBB: You use lots of animals in your art, what is it about wild life that fascinates you to paint them?

AD: The power of nature more than anything else. The animals according to their qualities can say a lot more than drawing a human being. Each animal



has its intrinsic characteristic and its that what makes the difference and so singular.

BBB: Because many of your work is on a massive scale, how does your approach to smaller walls or canvases change from large murals?

AD: I use to add more details when the work is smaller. It's another dynamic, another way to access the medium.

BBB: Because being a muralist is a very public way of creating art, how does the interaction with the public play a role in your creative process?

AD: I respect the places I paint. I do studies and research of where I'm going to paint as well. I try to gather as much information as I can regarding the culture, the religion, the aspects change all the time. It's important to have conscience about the spectator.

BBB: Would you rather paint your murals in a secluded area or do you like painting in festivals and events?

AD: I'd rather paint in isolated areas. It's truly different as an experience. The festivals are fun because I'm with friends, however the dynamic is different. I prefer the projects a little bit secluded where I can find myself getting in touch with my own creative process.

BBB: Who are your 5 favourite muralists right now and why?

AD: I will keep this answer for myself.

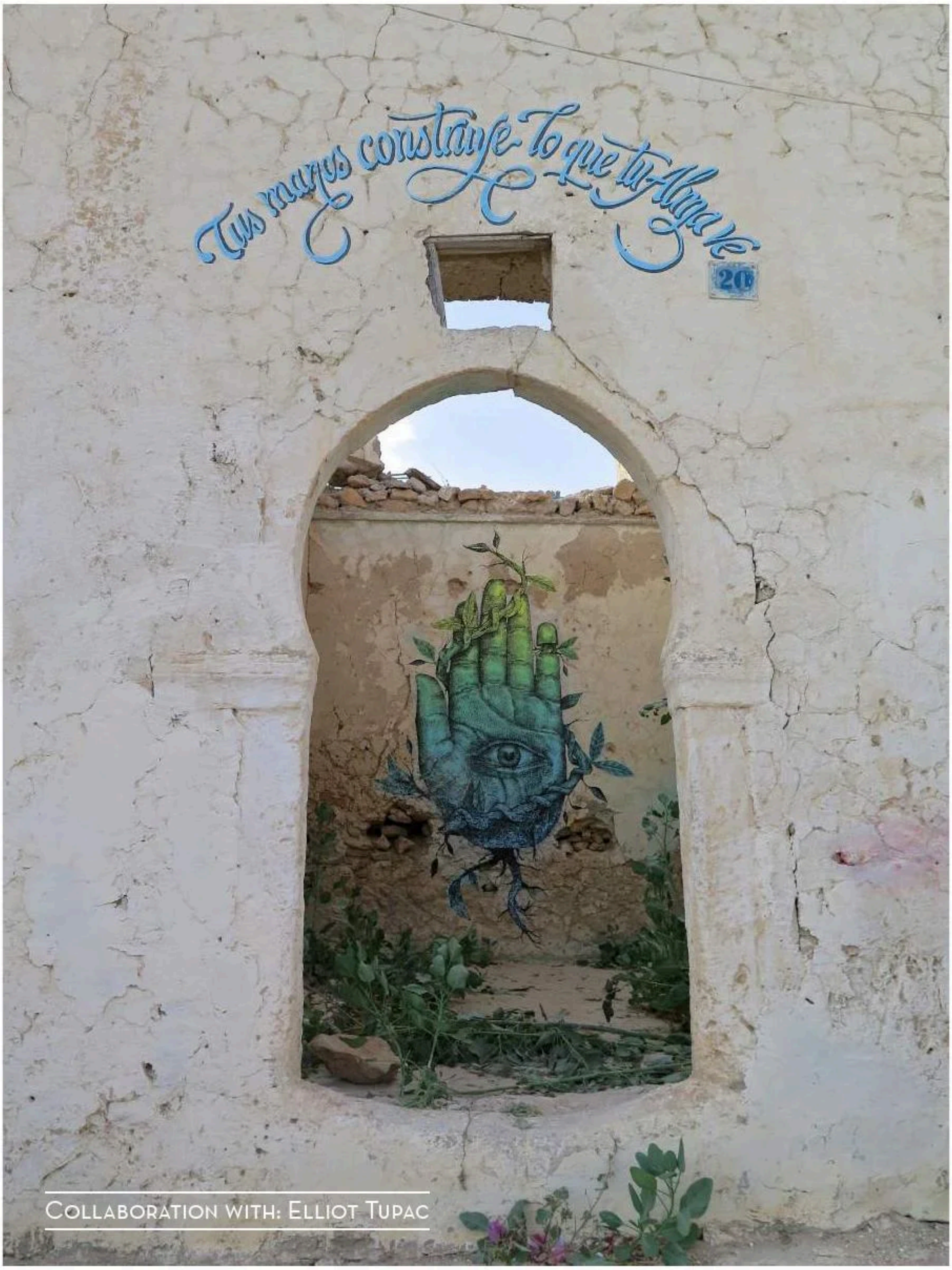
BBB: What are your 3 favourite things to do, see or play outside of creating art?

Being on my island of Puerto Rico, hanging with my family and my friends and the corresponding party!

◆

WWW.ALEXIS-DIAZ.COM

Instagram: @Alexis_Diaz


Tus manos construye lo que tu Alma ve
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Collaboration with: Elliot Tupac

PESSA
AMo!
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